

Up amongst the snowy mountains of North Wales, magically carved in to the ancient rock of Snowdonia, there lay a building better protected than any other in the country, except perhaps Hogwarts. Only bearers of the mark could apparate in and even then, they could only appear in to a lobby; a lobby constantly watched and guarded by some of the most powerful dark wizards under the Dark Lord's command. Those who passed through the lobby would find themselves in a corridor, being subjected to a rigorous magical screening process which scanned the magical signature of those who wished to enter the room beyond. Those who weren't recognised were killed. Many would argue, however, that all this security was redundant as no one in their right mind would wish to pass into the next room beyond as in that room there sat the most powerful dark wizard the world had ever seen. This was the headquarters of Lord Voldemort.

The room was dark and dirty, the atmosphere nervous and foreboding as a musty smell hung thick in the air. There was a constant chill and those who entered would find that any trace of happiness would be sucked from them and they would uncontrollably shiver as they entered this pit of despair. The walls, floor and ceiling were all ragged stone, with a filthy rug and a single high-backed chair against the far wall, as if someone had made a rather half-hearted attempt to make the place inhabitable. Of course, he preferred it this way. Like a vampire, he loathed the light along with anything that denoted happiness or comfort. Why should they have comfort? They were nothing but slaves, a means to an end, and they needed to be reminded of that from time to time. A crowd of seven masked figures stood around the chair in a semi-circle and listened obediently in fear and awe as their master started to speak.

Lord Voldemort spoke quietly but commandingly, making no attempt to raise his voice; his Death Eaters would listen.

"Have you made any progress in locating the object, Bella? Lord Voldemort grows tired of waiting; surely you don't need to be reminded of the consequences of failure?"

"Of course not my Lord." Bellatrix replied shakily "We have been unable to locate the object my lord. We have tracked down the last

owner, but it died over two hundred years ago and the location of the object remains a mystery. However..." she added, seeing the look of fury that flashed across the Dark lord's face and knowing that the end of this sentence could save or lose her life, "I managed to find an obscure manuscript, which tells of a small, unplotable island in the North Sea. That is where it is rumoured to be."

"Good, you have done well Bella." The Dark Lord hissed. "I will finish this myself. Once I have broken the unplotable wards, the object will be mine and we will be able to move onto the final phase of the plan. You are all dismissed, except you Severus."

The Death eaters all gave a small bow before turning away from their master and filing out, all looking relieved to have escaped the room relatively unharmed.

"Oh and Bella?" Voldemort said, causing the evil witch to pause by the door. "Crucio! Try to be more prompt with your information next time." He laughed as Bella's screams echoed throughout the chamber and she writhed on the floor in absolute agony. When the torture finally came to an end, the witch picked herself off the floor and dragged herself out of the room.

An evil smirk on his face, the Dark Lord then turned to address his spy. "Severus, have you managed to obtain any information from Dumbledore?" Voldemort questioned.

"I'm afraid not my lord," came Snape's nervous reply, "either he is unaware of the object's existence or is keeping it for himself."

"No, Dumbledore wouldn't dirty his hands with such a dark object; his biggest weakness of many. However, he will be aware of it, that muggle loving fool has an unfortunate habit of busying himself in matters that are none of his concern. The next time we meet, you will have that information will you not, Severus?"

"Of course my lord." Came Snape's reply.

"Yes you will Snape, Crucio!" Snape fell to the floor, screaming in agony.

"Lord Voldemort will be less lenient next time".

Snape stood gingerly and stalked out the room leaving Voldemort alone to lean back in his throne, his hands clasped together in thought and a small smirk adorning his face. Soon the object would be his and Dumbledore and army's days would be numbered.

Suddenly, the scene distorted and started to shift, coming to rest on the terrible and all too familiar image of a handsome man with long, dark hair being struck by a deadly curse to the chest. Time seemed to slow as Sirius Black froze before falling, horrifically yet gracefully through the dais that stood in the Department of Mysteries, a look of surprise on his face as his cousin looked on, cackling in delight. Harry fought desperately as he tried to reach his Godfather, but Remus' strong arms held him back. Eventually, the awful realisation dawned that his Godfather was not coming back and he fell limp, supported only by his old Defence against the Dark arts teacher as his heart became heavy and he felt tears threaten to spill from his eyes.

Over 250 miles away, a sixteen year old boy with jet black hair and startling emerald green eyes sat bolt upright in his bed, sweat pouring off of him. Panting heavily as the memory of his dream started to return, he muttered to himself; "Damn, this is big, I'll have to tell the Order about this."

Dear Harry,

Thank you for telling us of this, rest assured the order will take care of the matter. Please just try to forget what you saw and continue practicing your occlumency. Contact us again if your relatives are mistreating you in any way.

Yours sincerely,

Albus Dumbledore.

Harry angrily screwed up the letter and threw it to the floor, 'He didn't even have the decency to tell me what this object was', he thought, taking a deep breath to try and calm himself down.

This had been difficult throughout the few weeks he had already spent at the Dursleys' (he could never think of this place as home). The image of his Godfather falling through the damned veil, his face contorted in shock, seemed permanently tattooed upon his mind. He felt numb, numb to the agony clawing at his heart and threatening to rip it apart every time he saw that memory, playing on through his mind as if on an ever present loop. Sirius wouldn't have wanted him to mourn for him, of that he was sure, but he was the closest thing Harry had ever had to a father; someone who cared for him unconditional, who had offered him a home and a semblance of normality before the cruel hand of fate had torn it away from both of them.

But after weeks of everlasting darkness and pain, Harry had finally accepted the death of his godfather, not got over it, not by a long way, but accepted the fact that he was gone. As he had spent the long, lonely hours of day with nought but his nightmares for company, realisation had slowly dawned on him that, whether he liked it or not, it was his destiny to finally end this war, one way or another. He didn't have the luxury of time to mourn for his beloved Godfather. This line of thought led him back to the prophecy;

'The one with the power to vanquish the dark lord approaches...born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...And the dark lord will mark him as his equal but he will have a

power the dark lord knows not...And either must die at the hands of the other, for neither can live while the other survives...the one with the power to vanquish the dark lord will be born as the seventh month dies.

These words haunted Harry's very soul. How was he supposed to defeat one of the most powerful dark wizards of all time? Even Dumbledore had trouble keeping up with him. He couldn't duel like they did in the Department of Mysteries. 'Stop it' he told himself, there was no point in thinking this way; he needed to start thinking proactively. He needed to plan, to prepare and to train.

With this in mind, Harry took out a piece of parchment and quill and started to set down for himself a 'to do list' of the things necessary for him to do to rid the world of the evil that cost his godfather his life. He paused a moment, sucking on the end of his quill in thought before putting it on to paper and putting down his first objective:

1. Research as many useful DADA spells as possible, along with any other spells that could be helpful in a duel or battle situation.

This, he knew was paramount. If he was to stand a chance against the dark lord or even some of the more powerful Death Eaters, his knowledge of spells needed to expand exponentially upon his fifth year education.

2. Practice these spells to help increase skill and power.

3. Research in to the dark arts.

Harry knew that the order would not approve of this, but also knew that it was imperative that he knew what he was up against, after all, how was he supposed to fight something he didn't understand? Also he didn't really feel like doing anything Dumbledore or his order said.

It was fair to say that Harry was angry with the old man. He had manipulated him and withheld important information which, not only regarded him but could influence whether he lived or died in the war. If he had known about the prophecy sooner, he could have prepared,

he could have paid attention in class and Sirius might be here today. Berating himself for get off topic, Harry turned back to his list.

#### 4. Get in to shape.

From experience, he knew how important physical fitness was in a duel. Dodging curses and rapidly firing off spells of his own really took it out of him and although Quidditch had helped, it couldn't hurt to be fitter.

#### 5. Start a war effort: Train others, recruit people in to DA, try and get some spies and key allies.

This was a very important one. Harry wasn't arrogant enough to think that he could end this war on his own. Even if he was the only one who could defeat Voldemort, he would need others to fight the Death Eaters and anything else that the dark lord had managed to recruit in to his army. He was going to turn the DA in to a proper army, a fighting force that would be of value in the war.

Putting his quill down Harry looked down at the list satisfied, happy that at last he was going to be doing something of use, his life had direction and focus and with all this, he wouldn't have time to dwell on any of the more unfortunate incidents of his past. Looking at the clock on his battered old bedside table, Harry saw that it was almost midnight and realised that there would be little point in starting his training today. Tomorrow he would go in to Diagon Alley to pick up some books and supplies to help him in his mission. He didn't quite know how he was going to get there, but he would work out a plan in the morning.

Knowing that any sleep he might get would undoubtedly be disturbed by horrific dreams of his Godfather, Harry settled in for yet another long and sleepless night. He stared around his small cluttered room, Dudley's old, broken toys, games and furniture still littered what used to be his second bedroom and with Harry's school books, parchment, quills and a variety of other things from his trunk which, while alone and depressed in his room Harry had rummaged through, it was messier than ever, but Harry was in no mood to tidy it up.

Sighing, he tried to relax and just stare out the window in to the cold, dark summer night, but he found that all lines of thought led back to Sirius. To take his mind off such thoughts Harry picked up one of his old DADA books and started to read, figuring that he might as well do something useful to quieten the demons of his mind. He had just passed halfway through the book when his eyes grew heavy and drooped and Harry Potter fell in to a dreamless sleep.

Harry awoke at 6:00 am with a plan already formed in his head. Scared by the Order's warning, the Durselys had pretty much left Harry alone and had allowed him to keep all of his school stuff. This had proven both a blessing and a curse to Harry, while their insults and jibes about him and his family were the last thing that he wanted to deal with right now, with the lack of activity and things to keep his attention his thoughts had kept bringing him back to the deep depression he felt after losing Sirius.

'I'm supposed to be passed this', he told himself angrily, 'no more feeling sorry for yourself.'

With that in mind he pulled his invisibility cloak and quietly crept downstairs, standing with his back pressed against the wall, watching the door, Harry waited. For two hours he stood there waiting for his moment as Privet Drive awoke and a hum of activity filled the halls, with Aunt Petunia hurriedly cooking breakfast as Uncle Vernon bellowed that he was going to be late.

Finally, at 8 o'clock, Vernon made his way out of the door and Harry was able to slip out behind him as the disillusioned order members just stood there oblivious to his being there. Grinning at the seeming success of the first part of his plan, Harry made his way through the streets of Little Whinging until he was satisfied that he was far enough from the order's intrusive presence. Putting out his right hand, Harry summoned the triple-decker Knight bus and boarded, raising his hood in an attempt to remain unrecognised.

"Arry? Is that..." Harry clamped his hand over Stan's mouth.

"Sssh, I would appreciate it if you didn't broadcast the fact that I'm here to the whole wizarding world".

Stan nodded his head in understanding.

"Right you are 'Arry"

"The Leaky cauldron please Stan", Harry said handing over the fare and walking over to one of the many beds that filled the bus, trying to

look inconspicuous as he was scrutinized suspiciously for his unusual attire. He himself glanced around, Moody's signature chant of 'Constant vigilance' ringing with great clarity in his ears. Seeing no obvious danger, he relaxed a little and settled down for the journey.

After a short but very uncomfortable ride, Ernie announced;

"Next stop, the leaky cauldron" and Harry stepped off the bus and in to the Dank, murky pub. A deafening silence wrung out as Harry entered, with all of the murders recently it came as no surprise that the few people who dared the trip to the bar reached for their wands as the hooded individual made his way through to the back and out in to the gateway to Diagon Alley.

Tapping his wand on to the correct sequence of bricks, the wall peeled away leaving a spectacular view on to the magical shopping alley, which was, Harry noted, not even a tenth as crowded as the last time he saw it. People hurriedly made their way from shop to shop, not even stopping to talk to acquaintances or get an ice cream. Staying in groups for added safety, they kept their heads down and wand hands ready as they went about their shopping.

His gaze once again scanning the area for any danger, Harry set a course for Gringotts. He walked over the threshold of the magnificent white building and joined the queue, waiting patiently to be served by one of the countless goblins sitting at raised desks in the enormous hall. Reaching the front, he produced his key and pulled his hood back slightly to verify his identity for the goblin. Harry saw a look of surprise cross the goblin's face before it was quickly and professionally hidden.

"Griphook", he said, calling over the same goblin as in Harry's first year, "Show Mr. Potter down to his trust fund".

Griphook nodded and beckoned Harry to follow as he walked over to one of the high-speed carts, which would take him down to the vault. As the cart moved off, Harry was too afraid to open his mouth as he thought that if he did there would be more than words coming out.

When they got to his old vault, Harry had the chance to ask the question that had been burning in his mind.

“Griphook?” he asked the goblin.

Griphook looked slightly taken aback at the use of his given name and responded slowly;

“Yes Mr. Potter?”

“Harry, please. What did the other goblin mean when he asked you to take me to my trust fund? This is the only vault I have, my inheritance, I mean there can’t possibly anymore than this can there?” Harry enquired, motioning to the large chamber, which was full to the brim with stacks of Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Griphook hesitated only slightly before responding, “While it is true, that this is a good sized trust fund for one as young yourself Mr. P... Harry, it is only a small fraction of your family’s assets. The Potters are an old and very well respected wizarding dynasty and your mother and father also added to the sum considerably being esteemed Healers and Aurors respectively. The rest of your inheritance is contained in the Potter family vault along with various items such as weapons, books and furniture.”

Harry stood there, gob smacked.

“Will you take me there Griphook? I’d like to see it, only I don’t have my key.”

Griphook smiled,

“A key isn’t necessary for this kind of vault sir, your were supposed to be informed of all this when you reached the age of eleven.”

“Who was supposed to inform me?” Harry asked feeling that he already knew the answer.

“Albus Dumbledore” The goblin replied

“Thank you Griphook, you have been most helpful”, Harry replied suppressing the anger from his voice. Inside, however, Harry was fuming ‘How dare he?’, he thought. It was yet another way that Dumbledore had manipulated and controlled his life, there and then, he vowed to himself that that would never happen again.

Harry stepped out of the cart and up to the door of vault number 7. Pausing at the door, Harry looked questioningly at Griphook.

“Just trace your finger along the pattern on the door.”

Harry looked carefully at the door to see a lightening bolt carved intricately in the top left hand corner. Doing what he was told, he stepped back and gasped as the door seemed to melt away in front of him, leaving an awe inspiring sight.

The vault was about the size of the Hogwarts great hall and it was full of Gold and silver piled, disrupted every few feet with some bronze. But it wasn't only money that filled the Potter family vault, just as Griphook has promised, there were dozens of book shelves with contents as varied as ‘The Potter family history’ and ‘ Battling the dark arts: an Auror's guide’. There were sofas and tables and weapons of all kinds; swords, knives, even some guns all of the finest quality looking both deadly and beautiful.

“How much is there in here?” Harry asked dumbstruck.

“At last count, Mr Potter, with the money added from the Black family fortune, forty five million galleons”, the goblin replied with a smirk.

“What? What's Sirius' money doing in my vault?”

“You are one of Mr Black's benefactors, Mr Potter, the will reading will be in a couple of weeks, but the funds were automatically transferred here upon his death”

Harry nodded in reply to the goblin, his face stiffening in determination at the thought of Sirius.

Harry walked out of Gringotts an hour later, his bag full of books and gold, along with one of the knives contained in his new vault. Looking around the alley, he decided that he may as well make his way from shop to shop, making his way up to the leaky cauldron where he would wait until nightfall to visit the less reputable of the two alley, he knew it was more than his life's worth to be recognised in Knockturn alley.

The first shop that caught his interest was one that he had never seen before. Small and out of the way, it was called 'Trimble's trunks' and sold trunks of all kinds. Thinking of the trunk Moody had, he thought that a magical one could come in very handy, especially seeing as he needed an out of the way place to train. Upon him entering the shop a bell rang somewhere in the back and he felt a shower of warmth pass over him as he crossed the threshold. 'Must be some sort of protection spell', Harry thought to himself.

As he looked up, he saw a man in his late thirties with a kind, good-natured face coming towards him.

"Can I help you Mr..."

"Evans." Harry said, thinking quickly and giving his mother's maiden name. "I'm looking for a trunk with multiple compartment. You know, the ones with rooms inside."

"You mean the multi-chamber trunks Mr Evans." The man replied "We have a wide range of such trunks, most of them are simply trunks with more than one compartment which are, perhaps, magical expanded to 200% capacity. However, like you said we do have some trunks with rooms inside but they don't come cheap."

"Money is no object", Harry replied, smirking, thinking of the vastness of the Potter family vault.

"Very well, let me show you our collection". The clerk led Harry around countless trunks much like his own current one, towards a small selection at the back of the shop comprising of just seven trunks.

“There isn’t too much demand for a room inside a trunk, but we have these seven, all with their own qualities.” The clerk informed him,. “These three all have three compartments, one normal one, one which has been magically expanded to twice the size and a third with a plain room about the size of a living room which can be fixed up to your own specifications. And these three contain four compartments, one normal, two magically expanded ones and a third which is set up as a small library and sitting area, slightly bigger than that of the other trunks.”

“What about that one?” Harry asked, pointing to a beautifully carved oak trunk at the back.

“That one”, the clerk replied, “is one of my finest creations. It is expensive, but seeing as it took me three months to carve the body and the intricate designing it should be. That one, Mr Evans, has seven compartments. Two are the magically expanded ones, one is a large library and sitting room complete with fireplace and three-piece suite. Another room is a duelling arena, with a duelling platform and spell resistant test dummies. There is also a fully stocked magically refilling kitchen and a professional-standard greenhouse. There are numerous optional spells that can be put on it; a shrinking spell which allows the trunk to be shrunk to the size of a matchbox at will, a shield charm to protect it from exterior damage, although this obviously does have limitations and a spell which allows only registered people to enter the trunk, they would have to be registered by yourself and can only enter by putting their hand on the circular indent on the top and stating the password. These, of course, will cost extra but are, in my opinion, worth the money for the security and convenience.”

Harry stood there in awe. He had to have this trunk, it went far beyond anything he could have hoped for and would be perfect for his needs.

“How much is it?” He asked eagerly.

“With all the added extras, Mr Evans, it is twelve thousand galleons.”

‘Not even a dent in my funds’, Harry thought with a smile. “I’ll take it.”

Twenty minutes and several spells later, Harry walked out of the store, feeling thoroughly satisfied with his purchase. Pausing to think, he headed towards his next and possibly most important destination: 'Flourish and Blotts'.

The bookstore looked unnaturally empty to Harry's eyes, he was used to seeing it thriving with activity, but it had now been reduced to only three customers by fear. Harry walked in and went straight to his favourite and most vital section of the shop, the one entitled: Defence against the dark arts. He immediately got to work, picking out books that caught his eye, thirty minutes later and laden with over twenty books, he moved over to transfiguration, picking up a further ten. He then went on to visit the; Charms, potions and history of magic sections picking out eight, four and two books from each section respectively. Harry carried his books over to the cash register, numbering over forty in total, he managed to heave them on to the desk with a thump. Paying for his purchases, he hurriedly left the shop before the bookkeeper, who was glaring at him suspiciously in his dark cloak and hood, could get a good look at his face.

With the main bulk of his essential shopping done, at least what he could do during the day, Harry headed towards some wizarding clothes shop, buying various casual and formal robes along with a new pair of dress robes and some battle robes for the training that he was planning to do. He also topped up his potions supplies, for some of the various potions he was planning to aid him, both in his plans and to help with his nightmares and lack of sleep. His favourite purchase, however, was a wand holster, which allowed you to connect your wand to your forearm. It took a few times to get it right but soon Harry could have his wand in his hand with a flick of his wrist. He briefly considered going to visit Fred and George but knew that he couldn't risk them going to Ron and Hermione or worse, the order.

Going in to muggle London, Harry went in to several clothes shops and got some decent clothes and ones that actually fit. He also got himself a new watch to replace the one that had stopped working in the lake during the Tri-wizard tournament. 'About time', Harry thought, 'I've been looking at a bare wrist for the time for over a year'.

With his shopping complete for the day, Harry headed back to the 'Leaky cauldron' to rest before his nighttime trip. Entering the pub, he once again bowed his head to avoid being recognised by one of the pubs' inebriated inhabitants, he really didn't feel like being harassed by a drunk who wanted to shake his hand and tell him that he believed him all along. 'That and the minor fact that an almost all-powerful dark lord is after my blood', Harry thought to himself sarcastically.

Harry walked up to the bar and leaned forward towards Tom and lowered his hood, enough to allow him to see his scar, he knew that Tom at least was trustworthy.

"Do you have a spare room Tom? I won't be needing it for the night, just for a couple of hours." Harry enquired.

"Of course, Mr Potter", Tom replied "Number 15 is free, that will be five galleons".

"Thanks Tom, and I'd appreciate it if we kept my presence here to ourselves", Harry said as he was handed the key.

"No need to ask, Mr Potter, all business is conducted in confidence" Tom replied. With one last nod to Tom, Harry raised his hood and headed up to his room.

Two hours later, as the sun started to set Harry emerged from 'The Leaky cauldron' and in to the street, once again attired in his dark cloak and hood. Glancing around for any sign of potential danger, he headed up by the side of 'Gringotts' and in to 'Knockturn Alley'. The alley was as dark and grimy as ever, a feeling of foreboding emanating from the infamous street. This was the last place that the boy who lived should have been wandering of a night but Harry knew that it was vital. If he was to fight the dark arts he had to learn the dark arts and there was no better place for that than 'Knockturn Alley'.

Walking quickly and purposefully to avoid any unwanted attention, Harry came to his first stop, the store he had been in once before and had seen the Malfoys selling all means of dark goods, steeling

himself, Harry entered 'Borgin and Burkes'. The greasy co-owner of the shop was stood behind the counter and looked up as Harry entered and marched towards him.

"Can I help you with something Mr..." He sneered

"Yes, I wanted to know if you could help me with a rather sensitive matter", Harry replied, ignoring the enquiry after his name, "you see I need to be confident that any business transactions that may occur between us will not find their way to the ministry."

"Rest assured sir, any business conducted here will remain here. What is it that I may assist you with?" Borgin asked, his eyes lighting up at the possibility of business. Even the criminals were afraid to come out in these dark times, if it wasn't for the Dark lord's death eaters he would have gone bankrupt long before now.

"Well you see, I am not yet of age in the eyes of the ministry but my father and I feel that in these uncertain times I need to be able to actively practice magic outside of Hogwarts. I was informed that you would be able to help me in relation to this."

"May I ask you who your father is? While I may or may not, be able to be of assistance, you must understand that such measures can not be undertaken with everybody." Borgin asked curiously

"My father's identity is none of your concern. Just know that, while he may be, shall we say incapacitated now, he will soon be available soon and he will be most displeased if you do not cooperate with his requests." Harry said with a smirk. He knew full well that news of the captured death eaters had not been released to the public, but was just as confident that criminals such as Borgin would already know.

"Of course, sir, right this way", Borgin replied, Harry's words creating the desired amount of fear in the small, pathetic man.

Borgin went to the door and locked it, before beckoning Harry to follow him and led him through to a back room of the shop. The room was small and cramped with bookcases full of dark books around three of the walls and a cauldron with a bubbling murky green potion

inside in the centre of the room. Going over to one of the bookcases, he pulled out a large and crumbling tome and started to flick through the pages. Stopping about halfway through the book, he turned to Harry.

"There are two parts in making your magic untraceable, the first being a simple spell and the second a potion." Harry nodded in response "the procedure will be painful sir, but the effects are instantaneous and no one will be able to track it." Borgin said.

"just do it." Harry replied, Borgin nodded and took out his wand.

"Brace yourself sir" he said, "Celo Hecate". Harry gritted his teeth as a wave of pain washed over him. The pain was bad, but nothing compared to the 'cruciatus curse' and Harry resisted the urge to yelp in pain, not wanting to appear weak to this man. It was over as quickly as it had begun and Harry suddenly felt more free and more in touch with his magic.

"Your magic is now untraceable sir, but you need to drink this potion, it stops the ministry from being able to trace the 'Celo Hecate' spell on you." Borgin said, holding out a vile looking brown potion. With a grimace, Harry downed the potion in one, fighting down the impulse to gag.

"Thank you Mr Borgin, you have been most helpful." Harry said

"Is there anything else I can do for you sir?" Borgin asked slimily.

"Yes", Harry replied, "I am looking for some books, not the kind of thing you would find in 'Flourish and Blotts' and I was just admiring you collection."

"You will find, sir, that anything can be bought here for a price. Take a look around and let me know if you need any assistance", Borgin said.

Harry ended up buying sixteen books, all looking at various aspects of the dark arts, including ones on the unforgivable and numerous other dark and illegal curses.

"It's been a pleasure doing business with you, Mr Borgin", Harry said, after departing with over five thousand galleons.

"And you sir", Borgin replied, grinning from ear to ear at his sale.

"Oh and Mr Borgin?" Harry said, turning around as Borgin looked up, "Obliviate!"

"It wouldn't do for me to be funding dark wizards would it?" Harry mumbled as he took back his money from a dazed looking Borgin, who had quite forgotten about the mysterious young customer. With a satisfied smirk on his lips, Harry walked out of the shop.

Harry was extremely satisfied with his purchases; he finally felt that he was doing something in preparing himself for the inevitable. Tomorrow, the training would truly start and it wouldn't finish until that evil snake was in the ground and all of his pathetic followers beside him.

He glanced at his new watch to see that it read nine forty five. 'I better get back before anyone notices I've gone,' he thought to himself. Just as Harry had emerged from 'Knockturn Alley and on to it's lighter twin, a series of pops rung out through the air and people started to scream. Dark robed men had appeared in the street, ghostly white masks covering their face and wands in hand. Finding himself surrounded, Harry managed to overcome his shock and snapped his wrist, making his own wand fly to his hand.

Glancing around him, Harry saw that the seven death eaters that made up a circle around him had hesitated; taking note of his dark attire and emergence from Knockturn alley and wondering what side he was on. Taking advantage of this, Harry pointed his wand towards three of the wizards and screaming; "Reducto!" The Death eaters were blown apart, scattered as far as thirty feet, dead or just unconscious Harry didn't really care as long as they weren't getting up any time soon.

With the circle blown apart into a semi-circle, Harry ran through the gap and back towards Knockturn alley, Zigzagging as the Death eaters, who had just recovered from the explosion, began to shoot deadly bolts of green light his way. Back in the darker of the alleys, Harry managed to find a stall and positioned himself behind it, using as a blockade between him and his pursuers. Catching his breath and forcing himself to calm down, Harry peeked over his barrier to see the death eaters running his way having seen him duck behind the stall.

Steadying his wand on his left arm, Harry aimed, and shouted; "Stupefy!" The stunner found it's mark and one of the remaining four fell, to be bound by ropes, conjured by Harry a second later. The Death eaters continued forward, slowing slightly at the sight of their fallen comrade, more weary of the unknown assailant, but Harry could only watch as with the two most feared words in the wizarding world; 'Avada Kedavra!' His only defence caught fire and burnt to the ground, having just missed the top of Harry's head.

Now exposed, Harry pulled himself to his feet just as one of the Death Eaters cried; "Abscindo!" Harry winced as the slicing hex hit him in the arm and his skin opened up in an inch deep wound. He then managed to hit two more death eaters with stunners before he had to dive to one side avoiding another killing curse. It was now one on one and the remaining Death eater, who had almost a foot on Harry, looked noticeably unsure of himself. He raised his wand and, aiming it at Harry's heart screaming "Diffindo!"

Harry just managed to raise a shield, shouting "Protego! Stupefy!"

The Death eater dodged the stunner and sent off a bludgeoning curse towards Harry who raised a shield and once again yelled "Reducto!" The Death eater managed to dodge the curse, but it hit the wall of the shop behind him sending masses of debris showering down on him, knocking him unconscious and effectively ending the duel.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Harry magically bound his opponent with ropes and pulled back his mask. He knew that his adversaries could not have been high-level Death eaters, as he knew he wasn't yet nearly powerful enough to take down seven of them and wasn't surprised to see that he didn't recognise the well built villain and noticed that he couldn't be older than nineteen, just out of Hogwarts.

Looking around, Harry realised that chaos was still reigning around him as over two dozen Death eaters continued to terrorise the people of Diagon alley, setting fire to buildings and firing curses at members of the public. He was dismayed to see that very few people were fighting back, too afraid for their own lives and the lives of their families, they were running and disappearing from the scene.

That was when he heard it. The most evil and loathsome sound in the world to Harry's ears; the cruel, mocking baby voice of his godfather's killer. Bellatrix Lestrange stood over a small girl, no older than six, her parents on the floor in a bloody heap.

" You're parents really didn't put up much of a fight did they little girl? Now how long do you think it will be until you crack and give in to insanity, two minutes? Maybe three." Lestrange asked, as the girl backed away from her, intense fear apparent in her tear filled eyes.

Bellatrix raised her wand and Harry's grip on his own tightened, although he knew that he couldn't possibly hit her from so far away. Lestrange brought her wand down and was about to shout the detestable incantation of the cruciatus curse when a series of pops yet again filled the air and about fifty wizards appeared out of nowhere clad in the navy blue uniform of the order of the phoenix.

Realising that they were outnumbered, many of the Death eaters apparated away scared for their lives. Bella, distracted, started to fire

off powerful dark curses at the new arrivals, taking down a few of them, before the order started to return fire and LeStrange was forced to retreat and disappeared away to the safety of her master's headquarters. With LeStrange gone and many of their compatriots captured, the remaining Death Eaters fled, leaving the order standing in the burning mess of what was once a vibrant alley.

The aurors amongst the order members started gathering up the captured Death Eaters, while others tended to the wounded and did what they could to fix up the shops and put out any fires. Just then, Harry looked up to see Nymphadora Tonks heading his way and realised that he was standing above the bodies of four unconscious and bound Death Eaters. 'This may raise a few unwanted questions' Harry thought to himself, and turned and started to walk away.

"Wait!" Tonks called out, as Harry continued to walk away, quickly rounding a corner to get out of line of sight and more importantly line of wand. "Stop Aurors! Lieutenant Tonks!"

Harry grinned at Tonks attempt to sound authoritative and picked up the pace in to a jog, making his way out of Diagon alley and in to muggle London. Sticking out his wand arm, Harry called the Knight Bus and boarded, making sure that his hood still competently obscured his face.

"Welcome to the Knight Bus, emergency transport for the stranded witch or wizard, how may I help you?" Stan recited his spiel.

"Little whinging, Surrey please Stan", Harry replied, handing over some gold and purposefully avoiding giving an exact address to protect his identity. Stan once again looked at Harry suspiciously, noting the blood on his robes and the gash on his arm, no doubt having heard about the battle at Diagon alley, but Harry turned away quickly, not giving Stan time to question him.

Harry made his way to a bed and sat down, thinking about what had happened. He couldn't believe that he let Bellatrix slip away again. He hated her more than anyone, with the exception of Voldemort and he desperately wanted to avenge his Godfather by being the one to rid the world of her for good.

Harry was interrupted from his thoughts by Stan shouting out to the bus;

“Next stop, Little Whinging, Surrey.”

A few minutes later, the bus pulled up and Harry disembarked, walking the last few blocks to his house, once again safely covered in his invisibility cloak. Back in his bedroom, Harry found a bandage and wrapped it tightly around his wound, wincing as the cloth touched the exposed nerves. He then unpacked all of his new purchases, unshrinking his new trunk and opening the third compartment he filled up the library, put his new clothes, muggle and wizard, into his wardrobe, throwing out Dudley's old rags.

Having bought all of the necessary supplies and more determined than ever after the earlier battle, Harry set about making himself a schedule of all the things he would train himself in to turn him from an ordinary sixteen year old into a formidable soldier. Pulling a piece of parchment towards him, he started his list:

06:30: Run laps around the park.

07:30: Back home for weight lifting and press-ups.

08:00 Hand to hand and armed combat.

Having taken care of the physical exercise portion, Harry thought about what he would need to learn in terms of spells and other magical preparation. After thinking for a few minutes, he once again put quill to parchment.

09:00: Defence spells and curses.

12:00: The Dark arts.

14:00: Transfiguration and charms.

16:30: Potions.

Harry re-entered his bedroom an hour later exhausted, he had lasted about half an hour before the pain had set in and his pace started to

steadily drop until the last five minutes which he did as a slow jog. Nevertheless, Harry was pleased with the 4 miles he had managed to run in the hour and made a mental note to double it by the end of the holidays.

After a short break, in which his heart rate returned to an acceptable level, Harry picked up some weights he had managed to 'borrow' from Dudley and started to lift them. Again Harry didn't get very far and, after half an hour, gladly dropped the weights and, opening the fourth compartment of his trunk, entered his new duelling arena for the first time. 'Perfect' Harry thought as he saw the life-like dummies and duelling platform, the walls decorated with pictures of famous duels, Harry even thought he saw one of a young Dumbledore. In one corner of the room, were the equipment; dummies, targets and even some wooden, practice bows and swords. Harry picked up one of the latter, the weight feeling comfortable as he twirled it around and tried a few practice jabs

Unsure of what to do next, he went over to the dummies, to find a note.

Dear Buyer,

These dummies are not ordinary practice dummies. They are spell resistant and will repair themselves if broken. They are also animatable, as in, if you put your hand over them and say the word 'animate' they will attempt to dodge any spells or arrows you fire at them. For fencing practice, simply place a sword in their hand and say 'animate' and they will attack, finding what level you are at and matching it. For Hand to hand combat, place your hand over it's head and say the words 'Animate Hand to hand'. While in a battle, they will not improve in their skill level, meaning that when you beat them you will have improved in the art of fencing or hand to hand combat.

Happy duelling

Vulcan Trimble

Smiling at Trimble's ingenuity, Harry put a sword in the hand of one of the dummies and, placing his hand over its head, said clearly; "Animate!"

The Dummy sprung to life and climbed to its feet and, turning its head towards Harry, swung the sword downwards towards his head, reactions taking over, Harry raised his own sword and blocked the blow. Pushing the sword away, Harry adjusted his feet into duelling stance, just as the dummy lunged, and Harry was forced to parry the attack, before trying an attack of his own, aiming a jab at the dummy's mid section. This was blocked and the dummy turned the defensive into an offensive with an upward blow towards Harry's left arm, which Harry parried, but which glanced him on the shoulder.

The duel carried on this way for twenty minutes with both parties landing the occasional hit and Harry getting steadily more and more worn out. However, he was also improving and eventually, he managed to catch an attack from the dummy and spin it around, hitting the dummy's hand and disarming him. Harry levelled his sword at the dummy's chest and, as though conceding defeat, the dummy bowed and fell to the floor, inanimate once more.

Harry, spent the next thirty minutes experimenting with his knives and the bow, and getting started on hand to hand combat, going against the dummy once more.

After the hour was up, Harry once again checked his timetable and upon seeing what he was to do next, began arguably the most important part of his training. Taking out one of the new advanced defence books he had purchased in Diagon alley, he began to read. After an hour and a half of reading, Harry selected the four spells he wanted to learn first and sat down for a small lunch, before starting to practice.

First was a more powerful version of the 'protego' shield charm, the 'Aegis ultimus charm' would protect against medium level curses and jinxes and would take the edge of the more advanced dark curses. The Extrudo curse forcefully pushed people back, away up to one hundred yards, depending on the power of the caster and, this was Harry's favourite bit, protego and even Aegis ultimus was ineffective

against it. The curse had to be dodged or blocked by a physical silver shield.

Next were two spells, which were tied in to the elements of fire and earth. 'Deflagratio' released a jet of fire towards the target. More powerful than incendio; it could burn a human to the ground in seven seconds. After seeing the effects of the environment collapsing around the last Death eater at yesterday's battle, Harry realised that a curse did not need to hit the adversary to have a devastating effect on the duel. This led him to 'Motus Humo'; this handy little curse would disintegrate the earth, making it fall apart like in an earthquake. It occurred to Harry, that this could be useful for taking an opponent down as the ground fell apart at their feet. Harry knew from experience that the last place you wanted to be in a duel was on the floor.

With his spells carefully selected, Harry spent the next hour and a bit, practising the four spells until he felt that he had perfected every one of them. He then went over to the equipment corner and activated one of the dummies. The dummy then started to dodge out of the way, running and diving to avoid the stunners that Harry had started throwing at it. He decided that now was the time to try out one of the new spells he had learned to bring the dummy to a stand still. Carefully aiming his wand just in front of where the dummy was running, he shouted "Motus Humo!" The ground fell apart at the dummy's feet and it went tumbling down on to the ground, where Harry promptly finished it off with a well-placed "Stupefy!"

Pleased with the results of the first new spell, Harry revived the dummy who once again started to run around, making itself a near impossible target to hit. After a few missed shots, Harry realised that he would have to make use of the 'Motus Humo curse', firing it at the dummy's feet, it tripped and, before it hit the ground, was hit by a bolt of lightening blue light as Harry cried "Extrudo!"

The bolt struck the dummy in the chest and, much to Harry's delight, it was sent flying back eighty yards, only to be hit again, this time by a large stream of fire following a shout of "Deflagratio!" In seven seconds, as the book had promised, the dummy was reduced to ashes. However, Trimble's promise was also good to it's word and as

soon the last of the ashes had fluttered to the ground, they started to mould themselves back together, changing back in to it's former shape. It then bowed to Harry and fell back to the ground, showing no signs that it had, seconds before, been reduced to a pile of ash.

Harry then paused for thought, the next spell would be considerably more tricky to try out, the dummies, as impressive as they were could not perform magic, which would obviously be needed if he was to test the advance shield. He then remembered what the clerk had told him about the body of the trunk; it was heavily shielded, spell resistant, which meant that if he got his angles right and kept to less powerful spells, he could fire curses at himself.

Steadying his wand and taking aim at the far wall, Harry said, "Stupefy!" and watched as the red beam hit the wall and, as he had hoped, rebounded back at him. Quickly raising his wand, Harry traced a circle in the air and, forcing a feeling of security, shouted; "Aegis Ultimius!" He was satisfied to see the air around him palpably solidify, with a metallic glint and the curse rebounded off it, harmlessly hitting one of the dummies on the floor. Harry smirked to himself, satisfied with his efforts so far and knowing that all three of those spells could be invaluable in the future.

This took Harry up to the next part of his training and the part that would be the most dangerous and the most controversial, he still remained convinced, however, that the dark arts could teach him a lot. He was convinced that it was not the spells or potions that were evil but the intent of the user. With this in mind, Harry picked up one of the dark arts books he got from Borgin and Burkes, opening up; 'Dark and deadly curses' he began to read.

The first curse he read about was 'Sectumsempra' , this was like an advance slicing hex which made deep gashes appear on your torso and face. Potentially lethal, it was an illegal curse which, if he was caught using would mean time in Azkaban, but Harry knew that it was also one which could be useful in a duel situation. The book also listed the counter curse, the only spell which could heal the injuries from a hit.

Deciding that he would start off learning the spell itself, Harry positioned himself in duelling stance and read the book's description of the spell. It described a slashing motion of the wand, saying that the caster had to want harm to come to the victim and should put as much power as possible in to the curse as it was a very advanced dark spell requiring a lot of magical energy.

Preparing himself and picturing in his head Voldemort, remembering all of the things he had to endure because of him, Harry made a slashing motion with his wand, shouting; "Sectumsempra!" Harry almost fell to the ground from the recoil as a huge bolt of sickly green burst from his wand, flying towards the wall of the duelling arena. At that moment Harry heard a banging from his bedroom as, unbeknownst to him, Ron's owl Pig crashed into his window.

In that instant Harry turned towards the source of the commotion and away from the spell, the next thing Harry knew was intense pain as the curse rebounded off the wall and hit him in the chest. Two gashes, each inches deep tore into his chest and face, causing blood to squirt forth from his wounds and him to collapse from the pain and loss of blood. Losing consciousness alone in one of the secret compartments of his trunk, Harry managed to utter one word before succumbing to the darkness.

"Dobby!"

Harry was oblivious as a small house elf appeared beside him with a small pop, bypassing the wards on his trunk by the use of his special brand of elfish magic. Spotting Harry lying on the floor in a pool of his own blood, having just slipped out of consciousness, Dobby ran over to his fallen friend, tears in his large, tennis ball like eyes and started to examine his wounds. Noticing the book by Harry's side and being unable to heal his injuries despite his most desperate efforts, Dobby read through the text of the tome.

Dobby realised that he would not be powerful enough to reverse the effects of such a dark curse and thinking that 'Harry Potter sir' would not want to be questioned on what he was doing with such a book, he disappeared to the one person he knew he could trust with Harry Potter's life and his secrets.

Within seconds Dobby returned, bringing with him a tall dark haired man, athletically built with medium length hair and blue eyes. The man looked to be (and in fact was) about thirty seven but seemed to give off an energy which let anyone in his presence know that he was a wizard of great power. Wasting no time, the mysterious man, walked over and knelt beside the stricken teen, who reminded him so much of his old friend, and bent down to look at his wounds.

His examinations confirming what Dobby had told him, the stranger got to work healing the young man. Tracing his wand over each wound in turn, the he silently performed the counter curse and watched satisfied, as Harry's skin began to knit itself back together until no trace of the gashes could be found. With one last nod at his work, the man rose and turned his gaze to the worried house elf beside him.

"Take care of him for me Dobby", the man spoke in a deep, commanding voice, "James will not want to see his son so soon. The wounds have been healed and at the moment he is just suffering from loss of blood. He should awaken in a matter of hours, you should be here when he does. Oh and Dobby, I'm sure that Harry will be grateful if we kept this information from a certain Hogwarts headmaster." With that the man gave one last smile and winked assuredly at the small elf before disappearing away.

Harry slowly opened his eyelids, still groggy from his unnatural sleep, to find the anxious eyes of Dobby the house elf gazing back at him. Suddenly remembering the events of the previous night, Harry glanced down at his chest, panicking before relaxing as he saw nothing but unblemished skin, under his shirt. Looking back up at Dobby, he smiled.

“You have no idea how good it is to see you Dobby”, he said, “I thought for a second that I was a goner. I suppose I have you to thank for your quick response to my call.”

“There is no need to be thanking Dobby, Harry Potter sir”, Dobby replied, “Dobby is honoured to serve the great Harry Potter, but I am wondering, sir, how Harry Potter managed to hurt himself like that”.

Harry explained the events of the past few days to Dobby, along with his future plans, knowing full well that Dobby would rather die than so much as think about betraying him. It was during this explanation that a thought suddenly occurred to Harry.

“Dobby?”, Harry asked when he had finished with his explanation, “Are you still working at Hogwarts?”

“No Harry Potter sir”, Harry’s hopes plummeted, “Dobby has been reposted to the headquarters of Dumbledore’s order.”

Harry smiled to himself, this could turn out better than he imagined.

“Dobby, you know how I told you about my plans of turning the DA into a proper fighting force?” Dobby nodded eagerly in reply, “Well how would you like to be the first member of the newly reformed Defence Association?”

Dobby’s eyes lit up at the prospect of such an honour, not questioning what the job may entail, “Oh yes Harry Potter sir, Dobby would be honoured.”

“Hold on a second Dobby”, Harry replied, “I haven’t told you what the job would be yet. You see Dobby, I need spies, if I am to be of any use in this war I need information and the order isn’t too keen on

providing any. So this is what I want you to do, and feel free to say no, I would like you to carry on your duties, but also try and obtain information on the war effort from the order. You could then report this to me once a week or so.”

Dobby looked deep in thought, apprehensive about betraying the trust of the man who took him in after gaining his freedom. In the end, however, his loyalty to Harry won out; “I will do it Harry Potter”, he said in a determined voice that Harry had never heard from Dobby before, “Dobby will get the information for you sir.”

Harry smiled at the elf in front of him, “Thank you Dobby, welcome to the Defence Association”, he said shaking hands with a blushing Dobby.

An hour later, when Harry had finally convinced Dobby that he had fully recovered, the house elf disappeared, leaving with a promise that he would return in a weeks time, with any information he had managed to acquire. Satisfied that his first spy was in place and that his plans were starting to bear fruit, Harry rose from his to see that he was just in time for the last half to start the wandless and silent magic part of his training.

This, Harry knew would be a particularly difficult task. Wandless magic took a lot of power and skill and Dumbledore and Voldemort were the only ones Harry knew of who could it to a reasonable degree. Still, he knew that it was possible. Magic was contained in the person, not the wand, if it was the wand that performed the magic any muggle could wave one and conjure a spell. Even now Harry could feel the magic deep within him, flowing through his veins, all it needed was a release.

Taking up position on the floor of the duelling room and using his occlumency training, Harry cleared his head just as the book from the Potter family vault had said. For forty five minutes he sat there, delving within his own mind, until he could feel his magic, just as he could the first time he picked up his wand. Slowly and deliberately, Harry opened his eyes and raised his hand towards the book he had placed in front of him. Feeling the magic flow around his body, he forced it in to his arm and with one last effort pushed it forward in an

attempt to levitate the book. Twitching, the book slowly and clumsily started to rise into the air until, so pleased and shocked with his success, Harry let his concentration slip and the book fell ten feet to the floor.

Harry knew that what he had done was a good achievement for his first attempt, but realised that he was exhausted from the effort. Going through his trunk, he found a bottle of 'Pepper-up potion' and downed it, feeling his energy return to him. Noticing that he didn't have any more of that particular potion and knowing that he would most likely need some with his daily training, Harry decided that he would brew some more as part of his potions training the following day.

With that it was time for the next part of his training and possibly the part which he was the most excited about. For years Harry had considered carrying on the Marauder legacy by becoming an illegal animagus. The idea had always appealed to him and now he had an added incentive. As an animagi he would have a definite advantage over his enemies as it would mean yet another wandless form of defence and, depending on the creature he turned in to, could give him a surprise attack.

The transformation was made up of two parts, much like the charm to hide his magical signature. First of all he needed to transform with a spell, gradually, bit by bit, turning into his individual animal until he could turn into it completely. The animal then needed to be permanently bonded to him with a potion, which would also mean that he could transform with relative ease.

The book Harry had bought for this purpose; 'Releasing your inner beast' told him that it was important to start off slow, transfiguring single limbs and extremities first before moving on to the whole transformation, the process could take years. Remembering the pictures he had seen in the book of transformations gone wrong, Harry took this to heart so, pointing his wand at his arm, he completely relaxed as the book had instructed him and whispered "Intimus Animans". A crippling pain gripped him as his bone structure started to change. His arm started to elongate, the muscle expanding; ripping his sleeve in the process. Fur sprouted from his arm as his

hand changed into a paw and claws burst from his finger tips. Falling to the floor from the pain and shock of his transformation, Harry looked in surprise at his arm and, sweating and panting from the amount of energy he had just exerted, cancelled the spell and fell back on to his bed.

Half an hour later, Harry dragged himself up from his slumber, blinking wearily and having to push himself not to fall straight back down on to his comfy bed. Reminding himself why he was doing this and for who, he fought through the pain and fatigue and got to his feet. Once again entering his magic trunk, and opened the book entitled simply; 'Apparation'. Reading the passage three times and committing the instructions to memory, Harry walked over to the side of the duelling arena and started preparing.

Harry didn't need all of the book's warnings to tell him that what he was about to do was extremely dangerous but, he had seen what a difference it made in Dumbledore's duel with Voldemort and knew that it could be both convenient and life-saving. So with that thought in mind and reciting the instructions over and over in his head, Harry concentrated on his destination and with a swish of his cloak and all the determination he could muster willed himself to the other end of the room.

With a crack Harry disappeared the next thing Harry knew he was falling from ten feet in the air, landing awkwardly on his shoulder. Looking down, Harry saw that he was missing a shoe, though seemed to be in one piece. 'Well, it's a start.' Harry thought to himself and walked back to the other side of the room, preparing himself for another attempt. After five more attempts, Harry managed to successfully apparate the fifty feet to the other side of the arena and smiled to himself, happy with his efforts so far. Tomorrow he would start to increase the distance and speed and hopefully by the end of the holiday he would be able to apparate at will to wherever he pleased.

As his bedside clock flickered and changed to read 23:00, Harry once again sat down and opened a book, this time one on Leglimency and Occlumency, he only hoped that it would prove to be a better teacher than Snape. In fact as it turned out, without the greasy haired teacher

staring down at him, taunting him about his parents, Harry proved to be quite good at occlumency. He found that with meditation he was able to effectively clear his mind and though, obviously, he had no means of testing it, he found himself more relaxed then anytime previously this summer. The rest of his time after that was spent reading up on the theory of occlumency, touching upon the basics of leglimency and committing the techniques to memory.

Putting what he had learned that day, Harry cleared his minds of all thoughts before collapsing on to his bed and falling into a dreamless sleep. Although the first day of his training had not gone quite as planned, he felt that he had made a good start and that the new knowledge and skills he had learned today would be of limitless value in the war against Voldemort.

Awakening early the next day, Harry repeated the process over again, this time getting a little further on his work out and beating the dummies a little quicker. He managed to get through his defence and dark arts lessons without harming himself and came to the beginning of his transfiguration and charms training. With the events of the previous day, Harry hadn't got round to this part of his training and had some catching up to do.

As soon as his new watch showed two pm, he picked up a new charms book and started to flick through it immediately knowing what he was looking for. Finding his page, Harry started to read the text entitled 'conjuring'. The first thing that Harry would learn was how to conjure a solid shield.

In his research on the dark arts Harry had found that standard magical shields couldn't block a lot of powerful spells. Solid silver shields, however, were a different matter, if powerful enough, a silver shield could block the killing curse, of course his wouldn't be nearly powerful to block Voldemort's 'Avada Kedavras' just yet but it would be a start.

Making sure that he carefully followed the instructions in the book, Harry once again returned to his trunk and positioned himself on the platform. Just as he had done with 'Aegis Ultimius', he took careful

aim at the wall and this time muttered the words of the simple cutting spell; “Diffindo”

As the spell rebounded back at him, Harry raised his wand and, conjuring up as much power as he could yelled, “Arma Argentum!” Harry relaxed and smiled as, a shining silver shield appeared on his arm and with a satisfying ‘Bong!’ the spell deflected off of it and harmlessly away. Harry was relieved that he wasn’t going to be cut by his own hex; that would be humiliating; he had had enough of that yesterday. ‘I have to learn healing magic,’ Harry thought to himself.

Although he was pleased with the effectiveness so far, Harry knew that very few Death Eaters would be using ‘Diffindo’. With this thought, Harry took up position a second time, this time shouting; “Extrudo!” The spell flew at the wall and rebounded back at him, once again raising a shield, the spell struck. However this time he was not so successful. Although the shield took most of the power out of the spell, it didn’t prevent Harry from being sent flying fifteen yards backwards and crashing down painfully on his back.

Getting gingerly back up to his feet, Harry dusted himself off and giving himself a shake, got ready to try the spell again. Eventually, Harry managed to completely ward off the ‘Extrudo charm’ although his shield disappeared shortly after as his energy faltered. Satisfied with his improvement, Harry moved onto potions, brewing some ‘pepper-up potions as he had promised himself he would. He then went on to make considerable improvements in his wandless magic, apparition and occlumency lessons.

His attempts at his animagus training, on the other hand, were proving to be somewhat of a problem. Although he did manage to repeat the transformation of his arm and even managed to change part of his other hand, it always took a lot of energy out of him, making him exhausted almost up to the point of unconsciousness. This was not a side effect mentioned in the book and Harry couldn’t understand why he was struggling so much with this type of magic. Worried, he made a mental note to himself to try and look it up later on.

Harry's training carried on this, with him learning more and more spells and steadily growing more confident in his abilities and what he had to do. As the weeks went by, Harry progressed in all aspects of his training, he could now apparate pretty much instantly and silently to where ever he chose, within reason of course, and he was now using that time to dedicate to wandless and silent magic. This was another lesson he was progressing well in, his silent spells now almost as powerful as with the incantation and being able to perform most mid-level spells wandlessly, it still took a lot out of him, however, and he still needed a lot more training and experience to be anywhere near Dumbledore and Voldemort's league.

One portion of his training that was still proving difficult for him. His animagus lessons, though he was progressing at a better rate than he was expecting, he still suffered from severe exhaustion afterwards and couldn't find out what this could mean. Despite this, he remained committed to completing his animagus transformation, knowing what an advantage it would be.

Dobby had been good to his word and reported back to Harry every week with any information he had gained. From what Harry had learned, the order had very little information themselves, Voldemort was lying low for the time being, gathering an army with a few sporadic attacks on muggle and wizard targets alike, every now and again to remind everyone that he was still there. Harry had started to realise how ineffective the order was. According to Dobby, they simply got what information they could from Snape and tried to put people on the alert in case Voldemort attacked, what they weren't doing was taking the war to Voldemort. Ignoring the famous, 'Attack is the best form of defence' idiom, they were making little or no effort to track Voldemort and his supporters down.

This just made Harry more determined in establishing his own war effort and started to draw up plans for the DA. 'I really have to rename it', he thought to himself. Soon, however, his training as he knew it would have to come to an end as he left Privet Drive. He knew that it was only a matter of time before the order came to take him away and to the home of his late godfather.

Three weeks into his training and Harry was, as usual, in the duelling arena practising in Defence. Over the last week he had started to combine all he had learned in both defence and the dark arts and start to properly duel. Everyday he would place swords in the hands of dummies and animate them, increasing the amount of dummies he fought as he improved in his duelling ability. As Harry shot spells at the twelve dummies he was now up against, the dummies dodged and rolled trying; to get close enough to land a blow with their swords.

Taking them out one by one, incorporating the various curses and charms he had learnt over the past two weeks, Harry found himself standing against the final three of them. Fighting off fatigue, Harry dodged and raised shields himself, dancing around his opponents, waiting for his opportunity. And he got it. As he came out of a roll, Harry looked up to see the three of them standing close together and that was the moment Harry chose to strike. Aiming at the floor, Harry summoned the last of his energy and shouted; "Motus Humo!" And was shocked as he was sent flying on to the floor by the recoil as a shockwave emanated from his wand and hit the floor with devastating force.

The ground shook and opened up at the dummies feet, causing them to fall and smash apart on the floor. The force of it then seemed to ripple out, and Harry was horrified to see the walls and floors shake and the windows of No. 4 Privet Drive shattered from the impact.

Climbing up from his trunk and into his room to assess the damage, Harry noted the pictures fallen from his wall, the empty space where his window should have been and the screeching alarms of various cars outside and cringed. It was then that the house started to shake once more, though this time the cause wasn't magical. Uncle Vernon bounded up the stairs and crashed through the door and into Harry's room. His face purple with rage, he swung his massive fist at Harry's face. His training and quid ditch reactions taking over, Harry rolled with the punch and felt a wave of hate and anger consume him; 'Who did this man think he was? Here he was trying to fight the most evil dark lord the world had ever seen and he was being punished for it.

Coming up Harry thrust his hand forward screaming, "Extrudo!" Sending Vernon flying back through the remains of his door and into

the landing, crashing into the far wall. Walking forward towards him, Harry saw Vernon, get unsteadily to his feet, thinking of the years of abuse he had suffered at the hand of this man, Harry this time rose his wand and shouted, "Sectumsempra!" As blood poured from his uncle's head and chest, Harry heard a series of pops and turned to see half the order in his house pointing their wands at him. Dumbledore took charge of the situation and sent a stunner at Harry, and was shocked as Harry rose a silver shield, blocking the spell. For his part, however, Harry had expended all of his energy warding off Dumbledore's simple stunner and offered no resistance as another red bolt came his way, hitting him in the chest and the next thing he knew was blackness.

In the kitchen of No. 12 Grimmauld place a meeting was occurring of the members of the order of the phoenix. The members quietened down from their hushed conversations as Dumbledore rose from his seat at the head of the table and started to speak.

"At approximately 11 am yesterday, my wards on 4 Privet Drive alerted me that a dark spell had been performed. Mr. Potter had shot the 'sectumsempra spell' at his uncle, resulting in him being severely wounded. Now I know that we are all shocked of the events of last night but I must remind you that Harry will be very emotional right now and needs our support. With the death of Sirius he will be very confused and after questioning Mr. Dursley, I have learnt that he was the one who attacked Harry after the windows were smashed by an unidentified magical source, Harry then pushed him back with 'Extrudo' before using 'sectumsempra'. What I am really concerned about is why I wasn't informed of Harry performing the 'Extrudo curse', by the ministry. If we had known then we might have been able to stop Harry before any further damage was done." Dumbledore concluded, looking at all of the ministry employees in turn, effectively asking them to give their reasons.

It was Kingsley Shacklebolt who spoke; "We didn't inform you Albus, for the simple reason that the ministry detected neither the 'Extrudo' or 'sectumsempra' curses. The minister still knows nothing about what transpired last night."

Dumbledore looked thoughtful at this.

“What I don’t understand Professor”, Mrs Weasley said, “Is how Harry blocked your spell. I’ve never seen anyone do that before.”

“It seems that Mr. Potter has started to come into his powers”, Dumbledore replied, “What Harry needs right now is to be around his friends and try and get back to a bit of normality. It is imperative that we keep him under our watch, Voldemort knows that he has been taken from his home and is on the look out for him. For this reason, I give you permission to use force in keeping Harry here under our protection. Now if there is no other business, then you are all dismissed.”

On this, the order members stood and took there leave.

Harry woke up as the order meeting was finishing, Dumbledore had taken the reversed the effects of the stunner hours previously and it was just magical exhaustion that had kept Harry in his slumber. Looking around he found himself in Sirius’ old room in Grimmauld place and immediately wished that he had stayed asleep. Old emotions rushed to him, with guilt and grief in the lead and Harry, who felt that he needed to get away, quickly rose, dressed and left the room.

Wandering around the house, Harry felt his feet taking him in the direction of the kitchen and, opening the door, he was relieved to see that it was empty. Noting for the first time how hungry he was, Harry started to cook himself some breakfast. He knew that he had to get as far away from this place as possible, he wasn’t ready to face everyone just yet and the memories were killing him. He also knew that training would be impossible here and came to the conclusion that his only option was to escape.

With a plan starting to form in his head, he wolfed down his breakfast and returned to his room. Harry had just collapsed on his bed when his door opened and in walked Ron, Hermione and Ginny, Ron and Hermione looked at him wearily, as though expecting him to explode, but followed Ginny as she came in and sat down on the bed.

Looking up at the person he used to consider simply Ron's little sister, he noticed that the last few months had been good to Ginny. Though still with a petite figure, she had filled out nicely and her auburn hair glowed in the sunlight, which was creeping in through the window. Her flowing hair framed her beautifully delicate features perfectly and the smile on her lips played havoc with Harry's heartstrings.

"Hi Harry", she said, trying to start the conversation as lightly as possible, "How are you feeling?"

"Fine thanks", Harry replied, trying not to stare, but unable to bring himself to say anything else, depression once again setting in. Seeming to pick up on this, Ginny spoke up again. "Harry", she said, trying to be supportive and understanding, "Fred and George told us about what happened, how your uncle attacked you. I know it can't be easy to be back here, but know that none of us blame you for defending yourself."

Harry allowed himself a brief smile at Ginny's words but this was soon replaced by a scowl as Hermione started to speak. Ron who had been nodding in support of Ginny, suddenly stopped as he heard what she had to say.

"But you really shouldn't have sunk to his level Harry, I mean that was a dark spell. What if you would have killed him?" Hermione lectured, "You should have told the order if you were having trouble."

Harry fought to control the anger which was threatening to overwhelm him and spoke in a soft calculated way; "I was acting in self-defence, Hermione, I'm sure that the order would have been upset if their precious weapon was damaged."

"Don't talk like that Harry", Hermione responded, "The order are trying to take care of you and you are making it very difficult. You're right you should have defended yourself, but you used a dark spell on a person who was already incapacitated. To use a dark curse on a defenceless man is as bad as Voldemort."

Throughout this speech Harry's rage was growing and growing and Hermione seemed to recognise this as, when she looked up at him, she shrunk away, scared at the look at his face.

"You have no idea what I have been through at the hand of that man during the last fifteen years," Harry spat, "But no, instead of offering support one of my best friends feels the need to give me a lecture on right and wrong and accuse me of being the same as that monster. Well let me tell you something Hermione, violence is the only language a thug like Vernon Dursley understands, he is no better than those death eaters and it's time you realised that all is not rosy in the world."

"Don't speak to Hermione like that!" Ron shouted back at Harry putting himself between him and Hermione and, to Harry's surprise, drawing his wand and pointing at his chest.

"Ron!" Ginny screamed in outrage "Put that down now"

Harry's heart gave a flutter as Ginny jumped to his defence but, when Ron didn't respond, Harry's eyes flashed a deeper emerald green in rage and Ron just had time to feel terrified before Harry snapped his finger and Ron was sent flying back after being hit by the red bolt of the 'expelliarmus charm'. Catching Ron's wand, Harry threw it to the floor and stormed out of the room.

Looking for a place where he wouldn't be found, eventually he found himself at the door of Buckbeak's old room. Going inside, he saw that the room was now empty, except for small bed in one corner of the room. Collapsing down on it, he decided to put his escape plan into practice the next later on that night.

Harry rose at just gone midnight that night, shrinking all of his possessions which had been brought for him from Privet Drive, Harry put on his invisibility cloak and headed out of his room. He knew that the order would never be so stupid as to leave the front door open (although they were pretty close) and no one would be going out at this time of night so he couldn't emulate his last escape, but Harry had already considered this.

Going out into the landing, instead of going down the stairs he turned left and quietly made his way the stairs into the attic. On one of his voyages around the house last year when he had little or nothing to do, he had found himself in the attic and had taken note of something which he had never thought would help him in such a way. Entering the attic, he went towards the wall and reached up to the sloping roof, sliding away one of the large old tile to reveal a gap just large enough for him to squeeze through.

Pulling himself up on to the roof, Harry spared the view a glance before jumping into the air and falling from the rooftop. When he was level with the ceiling of the first floor, he enlarged the shrunken broom in his hand and, pointing it in the mounted it, gliding to a soft landing on the floor outside. Taking one last look back, he saw his godfather's house disappear into nothingness before turning and walking away.

Meanwhile in Grimmauld place all hell was breaking loose. When Dumbledore had gone to find Harry for a talk, he had found his bedroom empty and the subsequent search turned up nothing, so, after calling everyone in, he stood in the hall, giving out instructions for Harry's recapture.

"OK, go out in pairs and between you comb the neighbourhood" Dumbledore said, "Tonks, Kingsley, you go and search Diagon alley and Moody and I will search Hogsmeade. Remember, use whatever force you deem necessary, we need Harry back.."

"NO!" Came a indignant cry from the stairs. The order members looked up to see Ginny Weasley, running down, being followed by Ron and Hermione. "Use whatever force you deem necessary? This is Harry we're talking about, not you know who, you could hurt him."

"Miss Weasley," came Dumbledore's reply, "I assure you that the last thing we want to do is hurt Harry, his safety is all we're concerned about. That's why he must be returned here where we can help him."

"Maybe he doesn't need you're help." Ginny said looking Dumbledore in the eye.

“Ginny!” Hermione said, looking outraged at her friend’s behaviour, “The order just wants to protect Harry. I’m sure if they are prepared to use force they have a good reason.”

Ginny looked at her brother who looked torn, but, seeing the look on Hermione’s face, kept his mouth shut. Ginny tried to argue back but was shooed away by her mother and the order member’s departed to commence their search.

Back outside, Harry had apparated away as soon as he had cleared headquarters’ wards and landed silently in a side street near Gringotts on Diagon alley. Deciding that he would have a bite to eat before checking in at the leaky cauldron, Harry headed towards Florean Fortescue’s ice cream parlour. Ignoring the suspicious stares of Mr. Fortescue Harry handed over his money and took his ice cream over to a table.

That was when he saw them. Heading in his direction, no more than forty yards away, were Nymphadora Tonks and Kingsley Shacklebolt. Tonks, seeming to sense someone staring her at her, turned and looked Harry directly in the eyes. Harry was about to apparate away when he noticed the purple glow of an anti apparition charm being performed, realising he had few options, Harry quickly enlarged and mounted his broom, taking off in the opposite direction to his pursuers. Tonks and Kingsley, however, were hot on his tail, reacting quickly; they had chased him as he turned up aside ally.

Harry realised too late that he had flown right into a dead end, the wall in front of him stretched up thirty feet, ending in a ceiling, the only escape being passed two highly trained aurors. A look of determination spread across Harry’s face as he dismounted his broom and flicked his wrist, turning to face his opponents.

Tonks and Kingsley came sliding to a halt, taking out their wands, ready for battle. “Come back with us Harry,” Tonks pleaded, “We want to help you.”

“This is for all of our benefits Tonks,” Harry replied, “I have to do this, you don’t understand.”

“Then I really am sorry Harry” Tonks said, steadying her wand.

Crying, “Stupefy!” Tonks shouted, sending off a stunner. Harry raised an ‘Aegis Ultimatus’ shield, and the spell bounced harmlessly off, followed a jet of fire Harry released, with a cry of “Deflagratio!” Tonks rolled out of the way of the flames only to be hit by a stunner, as she came back up.

With Tonks out of the picture, Harry squared up to a stunned Kingsley, who quickly shook himself and adopted a duelling stance. Aiming at the ground Harry shouted, “Motus Humo!” Only to see Kingsley leap over the disintegrating ground and raise a shield as he came up out of the roll, to block a stunner Harry had fired off. Kingsley returned Harry’s onslaught with a barrage of his own spells, ranging from stunners to borderline dark curses which Harry needed to conjure a silver shield to defend against.

Dodging from behind the shield Harry shouted “Concetrado Dorus!” Kingsley gasped as the dark curse flew at him, destined to cause a short burst of crippling pain to wherever it hit, he just managed to get the words of the conjuring charm out before the spell reached him, thankfully bouncing off his newly formed shield.

Distracted, Kingsley didn’t react in time as the blood red beam of the ‘Extrudo curse struck him in the chest, sending him flying ninety yards back into a wall. He was just getting wearily back up to his feet as a series of pops rang out and the alley was full of order members numbering around twelve, all with their wands out and pointing at Harry. Harry lowered his wand slightly in submission, knowing he was defeated and was about to raise his hands in the air when he sensed a presence appearing silently behind him. Turning he saw a tall, well built man with brown hair and blue eyes, who looked both strange and familiar to him.

Taking advantage of the order’s shock, the man stepped forward and pushed something into Harry’s hand. Harry felt a pull behind his navel and just had time to see the order start to shoot spells at the mystery stranger before he disappeared. Falling through the air, Harry landed from the port key in a rural, mountainous area, with what seemed to be the outline of a hollow behind a large boulder in the side of one of

the mountains. Remembering the object given to him by the stranger, Harry opened his hand to find a piece of parchment, unfolding it, he read:

The password of your fathers. Long live the Marauders

A friend.

Unsure of what he was expecting to happen, Harry wearily said; "I solemnly swear I'm up to no good." Suddenly the ground around him started to shake and the large boulder slid to one side as easily as if it was floating on a bed of air. Feeling a little more confident, Harry walked through the gaping hole in front of him as the boulder slid back into place.

arry turned, alarmed, as the boulder slipped back into place behind him, effectively cutting off any means of escape. Suddenly feeling claustrophobic, Harry called out to the cave; "I solemnly swear I am up to no good." Looking expectantly at the exit, he was surprised when, rather than releasing him, with a rush of magic, the cave started to chang.

Harry gasped as, before his eyes, the dank, musty cave transformed and expanded, morphing into a large, luxurious apartment. Harry could only watch, stood in what was now the living room, as; a three-piece suite, an ornate fireplace and even a TV seemed to 'grow' from the floor and the cave branched off into different rooms, with three doors now seperating Harry from a well stocked kitchen and bathroom and a corridor leading to what looked to be some bedrooms. Wanting to check out the incredible hideout, Harry also realised that this was still effectively a (very nice) prison to him and, having no intention of staying there permanantly, started to think of a way to get out.

Harry smiled in exasperatopn with himself as realisation dawned upon him and he recognised that there was only going to be one way of opening what was increasingly obviously an old marauder hideaway. Facing the wall, Harry spoke clearly the words; "Mischief managed" and watched, satisfied, as the boulder slid away to reveal the gaping hole of the exit, looking out over the town of Hogsmeade. Sealing the gap once again, Harry walked back into the living room to give himself the tour.

Showing around his new home, Harry found that there were four large bedrooms, each marked on the outside of the door with a sign the words, Prongs, Padfoot, Moony or Wormtail (though Harry soon blew off the latter with a powerful 'reducto'). Picking out for himself his father's old bedroom, Harry unloaded and unpacked all of his things and continued to look around.

Looking around; first the other bedrooms and then the kitchen and bathroom, Harry took in the rooms, all decorated to each marauder's individual tastes and peronalities, the dual kitchen and dining room and the pool-size swimming pool, before returning to the start of the tour. Settling down in the living room ten minutes later, a drink in

hand Harry began to wonder who the mysterious stranger was, the one who had saved him and brought him to his father's old hideout. He was clearly on Harry's side, even going against the order to help him, and he seemed to know the marauders. Harry's first thought was Remus, but why, it occurred to him, would Remus disguise himself while rescuing him, the face he had seen in the alley was not Remus'. And besides, he had overheard the adults talking after a meeting one day and they said that he was away on a mission for the order and was not due back until the start of term.

Glancing down at his watch, Harry saw that it was almost two in the morning and decided that he should probably get some sleep before restarting his training the next day. With that thought in mind, he went back into his Dad's old bedroom and climbed into the large, comfy, four poster bed, looking around at the bedroom decorated in Gryffindor colours of red and gold with various quidditch posters and merchandise scattered around the room. Using his new skills in occlumency, Harry closed his eyes and cleared his mind of all thought, drifting to sleep secure in the knowledge that Voldemort would not be entering his mind that night.

Waking up four hours later to the rude and intrusive sound of his alarm clock, Harry dressed before realising his first problem. His customary laps around the park were somewhat hindered by the absence of a park, 'oh and I now have dozens of order members trying to track me, in addition to the army of Lord Voldemort', Harry thought, coming to the conclusion that going outside was probably not the best idea. Deciding to make do with what he had, Harry entered his trunk and started to run laps around his duelling arena.

Coming to a halt an hour later, Harry put his hands on his knees, breathing heavily. Quickly doing the math, he worked out that he had just ran fifteen miles, smiling at his achievement and improvement over the duration of his training, Harry stood up straight and walked over to his weights, knowing that he had no time to feel proud of himself himself. Along with his speed, daily exercise over the past three weeks had made Harry stronger and fitter, his reactions were tuned to almost perfection and his muggle fighting skills were rapidly improving.

After his physical exercise, Harry decided that he would first compile a list of all the spells he had learnt over the past three weeks. Picking up his quill and parchment and pausing for a moment in thought, Harry started his list with the spells he had learnt on the very first day of his training.

Extrudo: Pushes people backwards, 'protego' ineffective.

Aegis Ultimatus: Advanced shield spell

Deflagratio: Sends out a jet of fire

Motus humo: Makes the ground disintegrate and fall apart

Sectumsempra: Creates gashes on the victim's face and chest (Can be fatal). Dark arts

Arma Argentum: Shield conjuring spell

Conjurus Ensis: Sword conjuring spell

Condolesco: Sister curse of the cruciatus curse, causes severe pain wherever it hits. Dark arts

Animus: To animate an object and bring it under your control, takes a lot of concentration.

Integumentum: Disguises yourself. Point at where you want to disguise and imagine how you want it to be.

Lethargus: Coma curse, puts anyone hit into a coma, length dictated by power, up to a month. Dark arts.

Flabrus: Creates a strong wind, useful for blowing people over or away.

Transformo: Transfiguration charm, different variations can transfigure objects into anything else. Useful for changing missiles (e.g. daggers) into something less deadly.

Praestigus: Illusion charm, used to create lifelike holograms to confuse opponent.

Fumeus Nebula: Smoke screen, useful for escape.

Lubricus Humi: Makes the floor slippery, hard to remain standing

Lentesco Humi: Opposite to Lubricus Humi, makes people stick to the floor

Intransitus: Creates loud white noise, causes people to be in great pain in their ears, will also distract. Border line dark arts

Suffuco: Air restriction spell, strangles victim Dark arts

Petroleus Aduro: Creates petrol, very effective when used with fire.

Necus Lamia: Kills vampires, harmless on other creatures.

Lupinus Neco: Kills werewolves, harmless on other creatures.

Adstrepo: Causes a loud bang wherever you point your wand, very useful for distracting opponent.

Transformo Ipse: Self transfiguration, picture how you want to transfigure yourself, uses a lot of power.

Langlock: Renders the victim speechless.

Opugno: Causes conjured animals to attack a specified target.

Confundo: Confundus charm, temporarily confuses a target.

Ardor Glacio: Flame freezing charm, to negate the effects of weaker fire spells.

Episkey: Heals minor injuries

Sagitto: Arrow wand charm, shoots arrows out your wand.

Arma Agumentus: Creates a shield of water which can be later thrown at target. Very effective when used with electricity spell.

Fulemenus Iaculor: Electricity spell, sends out a bolt of electricity, power dictated by power and will of caster.

Pulsum: Propulsion spell, used to propel yourself in any direction, useful for quick attacks and dodging spells.

As well as these and a few other weaker charms and curses, Harry had gone over all the spells he had learnt over his past five years education at Hogwarts and was feeling more and more confident in his duelling and overall magical ability. Knowing that any one of those spells could win him a duel and even save his life, Harry decided that, before he went any further, he would spend the next week or so perfecting and honing all of them and practising his duelling skills.

Hours later as his animagus training rolled around, Harry had a determined look on his face. Today was the day that he would complete his transformation. He had so far excelled in all of the magics he had learnt over the summer and he was damned if this was going to be the one to beat him. His animagus training, he knew, was essential, it would give him an added secret attack and defence and he felt that by following in their footsteps, he was growing closer to the marauders, to his father and to the closest thing to a father he had ever known. To Sirius.

With these thoughts swirling around his head, Harry cleared his mind and concentrated harder than he had ever concentrated before. Drawing his wand and summoning all of the magical energy he could from his now considerable reserves, Harry shouted; "Intimus Animans!" All of a sudden, Harry felt himself begin to change, first his arms and legs, then his torso and finally his head, stretching and moulding into something different. He felt a crippling pain wrack his body as his bone and muscle structure was bent and pulled in all directions. Falling to the floor, Harry had to bite down on his tongue to stop him from crying out in agony, but at the same time knowing that if he could survive the pain of the cruciatus curse, he could get through this. Now standing at around four and a half feet high and nine feet long, Harry took his first steps on four paws, making his

towards the mirror in his father's bedroom, his long tail swaying as his powerful legs moved him easily despite his lack of experience.

Looking up at himself in the long bedroom mirror, Harry gaped in shock as he saw in front of him not, as he had assumed, the form of a leopard, but that of a large and powerful lion. He was jet black in colour, streaked with silver on his shaggy mane, a marking just visible on his face in the shape of a lightening bolt, sitting just above his brilliant emerald eyes. Recovering slightly from the surprise, Harry decided to test out his new body and, turning away, running out of the door and into the lounge, reaching forty miles per hour in the fifty metre space before grinding to a halt inches away from the far wall.

Amazed at his new speed and obvious power, Harry transformed back into his human form, finding it simple now that he had completed the initial transformation. Going back into his room, he decided to test out the speed of his transformation. Positioning himself in front of the mirror, Harry watched in awe as with a single thought, he turned into the huge, black lion. Turning to jog out of the door, he glimpsed himself in the mirror, only to be shocked at the sight of two large, leathery wings, camouflaged in the darkness of his fur.

Staring at himself in the mirror, he slowly and deliberately spread his wings to find a wingspan of fifteen feet and, curious, started to flap them, rising five feet in the air before he was forced to stop rising by the ceiling. Gliding around the room, Harry realised that it felt completely natural, flying unaided as if he had been doing it all his life. Landing softly back on his feet and, quickly turning back into a human, he sat down on his bed stunned at what he had found. His first thought was that he was a griffin but everyone knew that Griffins had the head of an eagle. Completely stumped, he made a note to himself to look into it, but in the mean time he had more training to do. Refocusing his thoughts on the task at hand, he settled on to the floor and started to meditate in preparation for the occlumency and leglimency section of his training.

Feeling that he had mastered occlumency after three weeks of intensive training but having no chance to test it, Harry had moved onto leglimency. It worked on the same principle as occlumency with

the exception that; when you had cleared your mind, rather than hiding your thoughts, you projected yourself in to the victim's mind. He had read up on the theory and was pretty sure that he had understood it, but he had hit the same problem as he had in occlumency. He had no way to test his abilities.

That was when Harry decided that, for this part of his training, it was necessary to do something he hadn't done since he had arrived at his new base and venture outside. As his clock flicked over to midnight, Harry whispered the password to open the exit of his new apartment and stepped outside, draped in his invisibility cloak. Making his way through the deserted streets of Hogsmeade, Harry stepped over the threshold of the 'hogs head' and took a seat across from three suspicious looking warlocks.

Carefully aiming his wand at one of the darkly cloaked wizards, Harry whispered the word; "Leglimens!" Entering the mind of his chosen victim, Harry found it quite simple to skim through the thoughts of his undefended mind. He was about to withdraw from the man's mind having found nothing but trivial, if a little sordid, thoughts, when he stumbled upon a thought that made Harry sit up and concentrate once more.

Through the man's eyes he saw the tall, cloaked figure of the most feared man in the wizarding world. Harry struggled to keep his presence a secret as he observed the man's memory. Lord Voldemort was passing out orders to his faithful lapdogs, of whom this man obviously counted himself among. Speaking in his slow, hissing voice, the Dark lord gave his commands; "What news have you for me Bella?"

"We have pinpointed the location of the island my lord" replied the voice of Harry's second least favourite person, "All that remains is for you to break the wards."

"Excellent Bella", Voldemort replied, "That could take..."

The connection was broken, Harry's limited leglimency skills faltering as he almost collapsed, exhausted from his efforts. The three wizards chose that moment to stand and take their leave from the dreary pub

and Harry, knowing he wouldn't be able to take all three of them of them in his current worn out state, decided it was time for him to also depart for the safety of his base. As he made his way back, Harry thought about the relevance of what he had just seen and, not for the first time, wondered what this object was. All he knew was that if Voldemort was involved it would be bad news and, with this in mind, resolved to ask Dobby to try and find out from Dumbledore what this mysterious object was. Re-entering his apartment and his bedroom, Harry cleared his mind and went to bed, pleased with the developments of the day.

Harry was awoken at half past five the next morning to the sound of tapping. The view through the enchanted window in his room was currently full of owls requesting entry. Seeing as they were bypassing the wards that he had put on to prevent anyone finding him, Harry correctly assumed that these were in fact official ministry or Hogwarts owls. Knowing what this meant, Harry gulped, thinking for the first time of his OWL results as he let the three magical birds into his room.

Relieving them of their packages, the birds flew off, leaving Harry with three parcels in his hand. The first was his issue of the daily prophet and the second were obviously his OWL results, he didn't know what the third was. It was printed on official ministry parchment and the handwriting looked vaguely familiar but Harry couldn't place where he had seen it.

Unable to bear the tension any longer, Harry threw down the other two letters and ripped open the envelope containing his OWLs. Skipping the pleasantries and the key explaining what each grade meant, he went straight down to the actual results, reading his scores, the parchment looked like this.

Defence against the Dark arts:

Practical: O+

Written: O

Transfiguration:

Practical: O

Written: O

Charms:  
Practical: O  
Written: O

Herbology:  
Practical: A  
Written: E

Potions:  
Practical: O  
Written: E

Divination:  
Practical: P  
Written: A

History of magic:  
Practical: N/A  
Written: P

Care of magical creatures:  
Practical: O  
Written: E

Astronomy:  
Practical: A  
Written: E

Harry stood agape at his results. They had far exceeded his expectations and he had even passed potions, keeping his dream of being an auror alive 'By the end of this war I should have enough experience for it', he thought. Most importantly, he had excelled in all the subjects that mattered, Divination History of magic and astronomy were hardly fundamental in the war effort.

Heartened by his results, Harry raised from his bed and dressed, starting with his daily exercises and completely forgetting about the other two pieces of mail on his floor. Two and a half hours later and with his physical training for the day complete, Harry returned to his

bedroom to start his defence lessons, planning on going over the arrow wand charm.

He was about to enter his trunk, 'Advanced duelling spells and techniques' in his hand, when he spotted some paper on the floor. Going over to investigate, he found the two letters he had previously thrown aside in his hurry to read his OWL results. Opening his daily edition of the daily prophet, Harry gasped before smiling a smile of satisfaction as he read the bold headline; 'Bones new minister elected after vote of no confidence'. Though not the snappiest of headlines, it read exactly what Harry wanted to hear. It seemed that the Wizengamot had unanimously delivered a vote of no confidence, condemning Fudge's inaction in the prevention of war. The high court then used their emergency war time powers to elect the former head of the magical justice department as the new minister.

Although Harry had never properly met Madam Bones, he was more than pleased with the decision, he knew that Bones knew what she was doing and she was renowned for being tough but fair. Reading over the rest of the article, Harry found that the first sentence said it all and placed down the paper, picking up his third letter.

Opening the official looking ministry letter, it was fair to say that Harry was more than a little surprised to see the name Ginny Weasley at the bottom of the page. Reading the letter, Harry couldn't help but smile at the youngest Weasley's conviction.

Dear Harry,

You didn't actually think you could stop me getting a letter to you did you? You might be able to outsmart Dumbledore and the order but never me, it was sort of obvious that you would have to let your OWL results through and it wasn't exactly difficult to get official ministry parchment.

Anyway, I hope you're OK Harry, I couldn't believe the nerve of Dumbledore, trying to bring you in by force. (I saw you're handiwork on Kingsley by the way - nice job). I just wanted to let you know that, even if I don't completely understand what you're doing, I support you and I trust you. Stay safe Harry and be sure to write back 'cause if you don't I'll hunt you down myself and save Voldemort a job.

Love from

Ginny.

Ginny's words meant a lot to Harry. Just knowing that someone cared was nice after the way the order had treated him. Realising that he would need allies in this war and finding himself more and more curious about Miss Ginny Weasley, Harry picked up a piece of parchment and quill and thought carefully before starting to write.

Attaching the letter to Hedwig's leg, Harry realised that for those few minutes while reading Ginny's letter he had forgotten all about the war and his training. He made a mental note to himself to make sure that Ginny at least would be prepared for this war, she could be his second in command, trained above the rest of the DA. Picking himself up and refocusing his mind on the task at hand, Harry re-entered his magical trunk and, opening 'Advanced duelling spells and techniques', got to work practicing the 'arrow wand charm' on the animated dummies.

Over the next few weeks, Harry practiced and practiced his duelling, animagus, apparation and general spell casting abilities. His silent and wandless magic was coming along nicely as well, he was now able to perform most weak and medium spells without the aid of a wand or an incantation. He had even made progress with the advanced spell, although when he performed them without a wand it tended to have the unfortunate side effect of making him collapse in exhaustion.

As the final three weeks of the holiday passed and the day before his return to Hogwarts arrived, Harry grew more confident in his abilities, knowing that even if he wasn't yet anywhere near Voldemort and Dumbledore's level, he could take out pretty much any death eater that came his way. Harry just prayed every night that that death eater was Bellatrix Lestrange.

Even if he had got past the original overwhelming grief of his Godfather's death, the thirst for vengeance was still very much present within him and he would make Bellatrix pay for taking away the closest thing to a father he had ever had. These thoughts helped drive Harry, pushing him during his weakest hours and making him get up every time he was knocked down and Harry knew that he was much stronger for it.

“Morning Dobby,” Harry said one morning as he heard a small pop behind him.

“Good morning Harry Potter sir,” the elf squeaked in reply, “Dobby is bringing news for you”.

“OK, thanks Dobby, why don’t you sit down”, Harry said, sitting at the table in his kitchen, beckoning Dobby to join him and pouring them both a drink. Though he looked anxious at first, Dobby eventually took a seat and started on his report.

“Dobby thought that Harry Potter would want to know that Professor Lupin has returned from his mission. The werewolves have agreed to stay out of the war for now, refusing to choose sides. Dumbledore is also worried about the journey from platform nine and three quarters, he is saying that all these students would be a good target for you know who. He is putting order members on guard and they is being told to look after the students and especially you Harry Potter.”

Harry rolled his eyes, knowing that of all of the students and most of the order members, he was the one who could look after himself the most.

“Thank you Dobby”, he replied “How is Remus? Did he look injured?”

“Harry Potter’s Moony is fine sir, ,” Dobby said, “but he is very worried about you and was very angry when he heard about Dumbledore’s order attacking you”

Harry nodded, satisfied, “Thank you Dobby, you’ve been very helpful. Please report back to me if anything big happens, but apart from that, I’ll see you next next week in the room of requirements.”

Knowing that he was dismissed, Dobby disappeared with a last smile and a nod. Harry sat there thinking for a moment, he was glad that Remus was back safe and it made him feel good when he had heard about Remus’ support, he knew he could rely on the last remaining true Marauder. Harry was a little concerned about the possibility of an attack on the Hogwarts, but shook his head, knowing that there was

nothing he could do about it and finished his drink before rising to continue with his training.

On the night of the thirty first of August, Harry sat meditating on the floor of his bedroom, mentally preparing himself for the meeting of the order members and his friends ('Or ex-friends', Harry thought, not knowing how they would react when they met again). Knowing that he wouldn't achieve anything else that night, Harry used his, now advanced, occlumency skills to clear his mind and climbed into his four poster bed.

Meanwhile, little over a mile away, a man in his mid thirties sat in his new office, supported by a brown, leather chair, a glass of fire whisky clutched in his hand. The man stared at an old photo, containing himself with four other people; three men and a beautiful young woman, as he contemplated the year ahead. He sighed as he remembered how the five in the photo had been whittled down to just two, but then smiled as he thought about the newest edition to the group, visible in the photograph only as a small bump in the young woman's stomach.

Downing the rest of his drink, the man ascended the stairs from his office and into his new quarters, knowing that tomorrow would be a long day. Storing his wand under his pillow, making sure to keep it within reach, the man remembered his old commander's mantra of; 'Constant Vigilance!' and had to stifle a laugh, realising that soon he would inevitably be using his old teacher's teachings, as he himself filled that role. Closing his eyes, he allowed the fatigue and the comfort of his king size bed to consume him and felt himself drifting off to a peaceful sleep.

Harry awoke early the next morning and soon remembered why he felt so depressed. Today was the day he would be returning to Hogwarts and, while this would usually be cause for celebration, it meant facing Dumbledore and his old friends. Realising that he would get little actual training done today, he decided to make do with just his physical training before leaving for Kings cross station.

It occurred to him that it was slightly strange apparating to London just to catch a train back to Scotland, a couple of hundred metres away. He felt, however, that it could give away the location of his hideout if he was not seen on the train. After running his laps of the duelling arena and doing the rest of his daily exercise, Harry returned to his room to shower and get changed.

Throwing on some clothes after his shower, Harry made himself a small breakfast of jam on toast which he ate alone at his kitchen table, half wishing that Dobby would pop in for a visit. After finishing his small meal, Harry felt at a bit of a loss of things to do, in the time he had before he had to leave for Kings cross. Picking up a dark arts book, he did something he hadn't properly done since before the holidays and relaxed. Opening the book on his lap, he sat on his sofa and began to read.

Just as he was reaching the middle of the large tome, Harry glanced at his watch and realised that it was time for him to leave. With a wave of his hand, his trunk rose and hovered a few inches from the ground and was promptly disillusioned while Harry pulled on his invisibility cloak. Releasing Hedwig to make the trip herself, he banished the cage and with an unseen twirl of his cloak, the young wizard silently disappeared.

Appearing, again silently, on platform nine and three quarters, Harry looked around the magical platform, noticing various order members positioned amongst the crowds of students and parents, noticeable by the un-concealable looks of terror on their faces. Careful not to run into anyone, the invisible form of Harry Potter made his way towards the train, boarding without the knowledge of any of the searching order members or indeed anyone else on that platform. Making his way to the back of the train, Harry picked himself a compartment.

Fully intending to stay alone for the journey, he locked the compartment door with a powerful and advanced spell, safe in the knowledge that no student, or even teacher, would be breaking it any time soon. For added safety and to avoid any unwanted attention Harry then added wards to disguise the compartment and anyone inside it, satisfied with his work, Harry stowed his wand back in its holster and sat down, waiting for the rest of the students to arrive.

After sitting alone for around ten minutes, Harry heard the first tell tale sound of students boarding and looked through the compartment window to see his classmates walk by, oblivious to his presence. He was about to turn away when he saw three very familiar people walk by. Ron, Hermione and Ginny carried on walking past just as everyone else had until, suddenly, Ginny stopped, a confused look on her face. As the other two realised that she had come to a halt, they turned back, asking what was wrong. Apparently, Ginny then told them to go on, as they turned away from her to find a compartment as Ginny stayed where she was, staring unseeingly into the invisible compartment.

“Harry?” Ginny whispered

Shocked, Harry hesitated a moment, wondering what had gone wrong with his wards. Then, however, he remembered Ginny’s letter and the way she had stuck up for him against his so called friends. Coming to a decision, Harry drew his wand and with great concentration and determination, uttered the incantation of the forced apparation spell. Ginny’s confusion turned to shock as she seemingly spontaneously disappeared, only to reappear moments later in a train compartment that, seconds earlier, had not been there

“Yes?” Harry replied.

Ginny looked at him, mouth agape, before responding; “Hi!”

Ginny took a seat next to Harry before speaking again, “So, care to offer up an explanation?”

Harry was about to answer when something caught his eye. A quick scampering presence on the floor of the platform outside led Harry’s

eyesight to a rat. While this in it's self wasn't that unusual, this particular rat, Harry observed, had a silver paw. A shudder resounded around the train as Harry felt pure, unbridled loathing and rage course through him. Ginny looked up at him, a little scared as she felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand up, the result of what was unmistakably huge amounts of magical power, emanating off Harry as his eyes glowed bright with rage.

"Stay there Ginny!" Harry shouted back at her from outside the train where he had just apparated. Taking off, Harry sprinted after the rat, not caring as he felt his invisibility cloak being swept off him as he ran. His eyes and mind focused completely on his target, Harry pelted into an alley, past the very familiar form of his third year defence teacher.

Just as the alley opened up into a wider square, Harry took careful aim with his wand and, with pinpoint precision and accuracy, fired stunner, knocking out the small rodent. As he reached the traitorous coward, Harry heard someone catching up with him and turned to see Remus Lupin burst into the square with surprising speed and survey the scene before him, taking note of the silver pawed rat which was seemingly floating in the air, Harry having picked it up after quickly disillusioning himself. With a wave of his wand, Harry revealed himself and stood there looking directly into Lupin's eyes.

Understanding passed between the two men and with a nod of his head and a smile in Harry's direction, the last marauder turned away from the scene and went to meet Moody and Tonks who were quickly catching up. Harry heard Lupin explain that he had gotten away as he disillusioned himself once war and pocketed the still unconscious rat, not trusting the aurors or order enough to let them have his prisoner. After running back to platform nine and three quarters, Harry quickly leapt onto the train, which was just starting to pull away and, finding his way back to his compartment, took a seat, a satisfied smile on his lips. Ginny opened her mouth to ask him what that had all been about but was silenced with a look from Harry which clearly said; 'I'll tell you later', Harry just felt that right now he wanted to relax.

The train started to pick up speed and Harry sat in companionable silence with Ginny as the train sped along it's course to Scotland and Hogwarts, interrupted only by the elderly lady as she came along with

the sweets trolley. As the two of them ate their purchased food, Harry saw Ginny seem to open her mouth to say something, before hesitating, looking unsure of herself and closing it again.

"It's O.K Ginny", Harry said, correctly interpreting her body language, "you can ask."

Ginny smiled at him before speaking in reply,

"I don't want you to feel obligated to tell me Harry and I know that it's your own business and everything but", she paused once more, looking for and receiving an encouraging nod from Harry, "Where exactly were you this summer and why wouldn't you return to Grimmauld Place? I know that that house must hold a lot of difficult memories for you, but, that isn't all there was to it, is it?"

Harry had to shake his head at Ginny's perception and, with a brief moment of hesitation, he started to spill his secret.

Watching her reactions carefully, he launched into a full explanation of everything that had taken place over the holidays, detailing all he had learned and achieved. A full hour and a half later, as Harry brought his story to it's conclusion, Ginny seemed genuinely at a loss for words, awe struck at all the changes Harry had been through in the short time that they had been apart. After composing herself, Ginny opened her mouth to speak,

"So, when are you going to start teaching me?"

Once Harry had assured Ginny (several times) that he would teach her how to really defend herself, conversation returned to more trivial matters, carefully avoiding the subject of Ron and Hermione. The journey carried on like this, the time seeming to pass quickly due to the effortless conversation between the two, until Harry noticed how dark it was outside. Seeing Harry looking out of the window, Ginny went to go out of the compartment, intending to change into her Hogwarts robes. She didn't get far, however, as Harry put out his arm to block her exit;

“Just watch”, Harry said to her confused look. Waving his wand over himself and Ginny in turn, Ginny gasped as her clothes turned into a Hogwarts uniform.

“O.K”, Ginny said, recovering slightly, “That is the first one you’re teaching me.”

With that, they both sat back down, chatting casually for the next ten minutes until they felt the train start to slow down and pull into the station.

Disembarking, Harry and Ginny quickly made their way away from the train and towards the horseless carriages which awaited them, rushing both to get out of the rain which had started to pour and avoid any unwanted questions from friends. Faltering only to give Hagrid a small wave, which Harry was glad to see he returned earnestly, Harry pulled Ginny into one of the carriages before promptly locking the door and sending it on its way. The short journey up to the magical castle was spent in silence which, Harry felt, although nervy it was not altogether uncomfortable, as he allowed himself subtle glances at the beautiful face and figure of the youngest Weasley. As Hogwarts encroached upon them, Harry had to stifle a gasp, as always, caught in amazement staring at the awe inspiring sight of the mystical building at twilight.

Entering the vast, elaborate entrance hall, Harry casually raised his wand above his head, casting a silent repulsion charm above Ginny. Seconds later came the satisfying splash of a shocked Peeves being hit by three water balloons, all of which had previously been heading in their direction. Walking into the great Hall, Harry took his seat next to Ginny and waited for the rest of his peers to take their seats.

With everyone sat down, Harry noticed Professor McGonagall exit the hall to return minutes later, a string of first years behind her, each trying to merge with the crowd, neither walking at the front or lagging behind. Looking over their nervous young faces, Harry couldn’t help but notice how few there were and how frightened, the war had finally caught up with everyone and this was evident in the solemn expressions of the teachers and most of the older students. Striding across the hall, McGonagall set the sorting hat down on a rickety old

stool, there was a brief moment of silence and expectation before the hat opened it's 'mouth' and, much to the alarm of the first years, started to sing.

{Insert song here}

The hall burst out in applause and McGonagall unravelled her list of new students and with the words, "When I read your name take a seat on the stool and put on the hat", started to read as the students were sorted one by one, to the cheers of their respective houses. As 'Wainwright, Doug' was sorted into Hufflepuff, the sorting hat was put away and Dumbledore rose from his seat, raising his hands for silence. When he was satisfied he had everyone's full attention, he looked over his audience and started to speak,

"Welcome to all of our new students and welcome back to the old, I have several announcements to make, but I feel that my life may well be in danger if I keep some of you from your food any longer", at this point he looked at Ron, who looked down at the table sheepishly, "So with out any further delay, Dig in!"

With a wave of his hands and a gasp of surprise from the first years, a delicious feast appeared on the table in front of them and the hungry students gratefully started to eat. After Harry had finished his lasagne and a couple of helpings of Rhubarb crumble and a general buzz of conversation had fallen about the hall, Dumbledore stood once more to make his annual announcements to the student body.

"It warms my heart ", Dumbledore began, "that in such times of hardship and strife an event such as this can still occur, that normality can resume in any form and I hope that, though the war will effect us all, you will all remember to keep on living. The light can only exist so long as love and happiness prevail and as soon as fear and depression consumes us, the darkness has won." Applause broke out at these words from the great orator and Harry had to concede that whatever Dumbledore had done, he could still inspire. As the cheers and clapping died down, Dumbledore opened his mouth once more.

“Now it is my great pleasure to welcome our newest member of the Hogwarts family, the new Defence against the dark arts professor; Professor Harding”

There was a generous round of applause from the student body, Harry however was sat perfectly still, his mouth agape as he looked upon the man now stood in front of him, looking him straight in the eye with a small smile playing on his lips. The man was tall and athletically built, his dark brown hair, was stylish and mid-length and his blue eyes shone as they looked at Harry. His face was what interested Harry most however, his face was the face of his rescuer, the man who had defied the order to help him and sent him to the home of his father.

The next thing Harry knew, everyone around him had started to stand, having been dismissed by the headmaster. Standing with them, he allowed the crowd to take him, walking from the hall and up the familiar route to Gryffindor tower and, still keen to delay the inevitable questions, made his way straight into his dormitory.

Making sure the room was empty, Harry descended into his trunk and into the duelling arena. Removing his wand from his pocket, he gave a wave of it, conjuring a human sized cage and threw in a small amount of bread and water. Finally he took a stunned rat out of his pocket and threw it into the cage with the same disdain and carelessness that others might throw out some rubbish . Making sure the cage was secure, Harry left his trunk, committed to questioning the rat (well, the rat's human form) first thing the next morning.

Re-emerging into his dormitory, he changed into his pyjamas and crawled into bed. Moments later, Harry felt Ron's presence enter the room, but resolutely kept his eyes shut as Ron tried to get his attention;

“Harry?”

Receiving no response, Ron got into bed and was soon snoring loudly, Harry himself eventually fell to sleep, thinking that tomorrow would be a very long day

Six thirty the next morning found Harry running laps around the black lake in the Hogwarts grounds, the miles, he noticed, were passing much more quickly and with much less pain as they had been as little as three weeks ago, this he took as a positive sign that he was improving. Screeching to a halt an hour later, Harry realised that he had to figure out a way to continue his training while at school, it was now a quarter to eight and he had to have a shower and breakfast before going to lessons. With nothing coming to mind, he decided that he would think it over later and headed back up to his dormitory.

Walking into the great hall, Harry spotted Ginny at the far end of the table and made his way over to her, collapsing into the seat on her left. He could see Ron and Hermione midway down the table looking over at him and talking and was just about to say something to Ginny when McGonagall came up to, handing him his timetable. Looking down over his lessons, Harry felt himself smiling as he saw that he had DADA first thing this morning.

"I'm sorry Harry", Ginny said, looking over at him, "but I must be hallucinating, I'm sure I just saw you smiling."

"DADA first thing, I'd say that was something to smile about, wouldn't you Ginny?" Harry replied

"I'll say", Ginny returned, "I've got Divination with Trelawney, so what do you think the new teacher will be like?"

"Oh I didn't tell you did I? I know that guy, you know the man who saved me from the order and sent me to the cave, well that's him."

"Are you sure?" Ginny questioned

"Of course I'm sure, I was inches away from him when he came for me in during the duel in the alley"

"Wow, he must be powerful, I heard that he held off a dozen order members for over two minutes before he managed to escape, I wonder who he is."

“That’s exactly what I want to know” Harry replied as he stood, having finished his breakfast, “I’ll see you later”

Leaving the hall ahead of most of the crowd, Harry took the long way round to the DADA, arriving just as people had started to go in having successfully avoided the crowd. Entering the classroom, he took a seat at the front of the class and waited patiently for the professor to enter, which he did seconds later.

“Good morning class”, Harding began, turning to face the class as he took his place at the front, “I am Professor Harding and I am going to teach you how to survive. Now, more than ever, it is essential for each and every one of you to know how to defend yourself and I left my job as an Auror to make sure that when the time comes that you are staring death in the face you won’t be the first to blink.

He paused for a second to let the message sink in and Harry realised that he had already learnt something about the mysterious Harding, he was an auror and that knocked him up a couple of notches in Harry’s opinion of him.

“Now, take your wands out”, the professor continued and waited until the students had obliged, “Now I want you all to fire a spell at me and render me unconscious or otherwise unable to fight. You can use whatever spell you like but try to make it fairly painless. Go.”

After a moment of hesitation, the students fired the spells, with Harry settling for a simple stunner so as not to give away his new abilities. He saw spells of various types fly towards the professor, even recognising a minor dark spell come from one of the Slytherins. For a split second Harding did nothing and Harry feared for the professor’s safety, but then at the last second, he jumped out of the way, landing in a roll before coming smoothly back up to his feet his wand drawn. Harry was impressed.

“Lesson 1, if you are facing a more powerful or multi opponents get the hell out of the way. It’s always better to avoid a spell then take the risk of letting a shield deal with it, what if your shield fails? What if it’s not powerful enough? What if you’re facing an unforgivable? And that, Ladies and Gentlemen lead me into what you will be doing for exactly half of your time in this classroom: duelling.”

The rest of the lesson was spent going through duelling stances and techniques and, although Harry already knew everything Harding told them, he couldn't help but be impressed by the new teacher's knowledge. As the lesson was drawn to a close, Harry packed away all of his things slowly, keen to talk to this man who seemed to know his parents and who was willing to go against his employer and the whole order of the phoenix to help him.

Harry approached his teacher's desk, seeing that he was writing, his head down and seemingly unaware of his presence.

"Professor-..." Harry began

"This really isn't the time or place to talk Harry." Harding said, his eyes still focused on the parchment in front of him, "How about you come back to my office later on tonight when we can speak more freely, how's five for you?"

"Oh, OK sir", Harry replied, "I'll see you then." He started to walk away and got to the doorway until he was halted by his teacher speaking again, this time looking straight in to his eyes.

"The order is a good organisation Harry and most of it's members are fine people, but they don't always know what's right and sometimes they can get above their station. I believe that you have earned the right to make your own decisions."

Harry nodded and continued out of the doorway.

Realising that most of his break had already gone and he had to get all the way to transfiguration, Harry set off in the direction of McGonagall's classroom. Entering the classroom just as the deputy headmistress started to speak, he sent an apologetic look at the professor before taking his seat at the back of the class. After Harry had sat down, McGonagall resumed what she had been saying, starting typically with a lecture of the importance of the year as the first year of their NEWTs.

Harry allowed his attention to drift, only coming out of his reverie when she started talking about what they were doing during the lesson.

“O.K class, take out your books and turn to page four, today we’ll be starting conjuring, beginning with small inanimate objects, today; a match.” There was a rustling sound as everyone turned to the appropriate page and listened to McGonagall’s further instructions.

“Now, I want you all to remember that conjuring is simply transfiguring air into your desired object. It’s very difficult to transfigure a gas, but it is essential for your NEWTs and will be of limitless use in your later everyday lives. So if you’re ready, concentrate on what you want to achieve and with a horizontal wave of your wand speak clearly the words “Elicio match!”

Harry rolled his eyes, he had been conjuring matches for weeks and was now comfortable with weapons and even elegant furniture. Knowing that there was a little point in doing something that he had perfected weeks ago, Harry decided to give himself a challenge, thinking that he needed a little fun. Positioning himself in clear view of Hermione, he took out his wand and prepared himself.

Concentrating hard, he poked his wands forward rather than the horizontal slash he was supposed to be doing, knowing that he had Hermione’s attention, he said; “Elixio Match!” Knowing full well that he had mis-pronounced the spell, but also knowing that he hadn’t performed the spell with his wand and mouth at all, while speaking the gibberish words and poking his wand, Harry had silently performed the conjuring spell with a wave of his left hand. Hermione was just about to tell him of when, but only a gasp escaped her lips as a lit match popped into existence in front of her.

With a smile at her confused face, Harry retreated back to his seat where he would stay for the rest of the lesson. As Harry left the classroom, he realised that he had just come up with something to replace his occlumency and leglimency training. His little trick had opened his eyes to a brilliant duelling possibility. If he was able to say the incantation of a disarming charm while silently firing a much more powerful spell he could trick his opponent into raising a shield which would be too weak. With these thoughts in his mind, he didn’t realise

that his feet had taken him into the great hall, coming back to his sense, he took his place next to Ginny once more and began to ladle food onto his plate.

“Mr. Potter?” Asked a young second year girl who had come up to him, looking at him in a mixture of fright and awe. “Professor Dumbledore wants to see you in his office.”

“O.K thanks, Rose” Harry replied, recalling her name from last year’s sorting. Harry laughed as the girl headed back to the Hufflepuff table, an astonished look on her face that the Harry Potter knew her name. Harry was still smiling as he turned back to his dinner.

“You’re not going to see Dumbledore?” Ginny enquired

“Oh I’m going to see him” Harry replied, smiling at her, “I’m just going to finish my dinner first”

Ginny smiled and shook her head as Harry took his time, savouring every mouthful before rising from his seat ten minutes later to go to Dumbledore’s office. Harry walked through the maze of the corridors of Hogwarts, treading the familiar path to the office of the headmaster. Coming up to the gargoyle, which guarded the entrance, Harry just had time to wonder how he was to get in, before the doorway opened to reveal Dumbledore, who beckoned Harry to follow him.

Stepping on to the moving spiral staircase, Harry started to ascend, a few steps behind Dumbledore, none of the sharing so much as a glance. Entering the circular office, he noted that all of the objects he had smashed in his anger last year had been magically fixed, looking as if they had never been broken. Remembering his roaring temper, Harry felt a stab of guilt before realising that he was furious with the headmaster for his betrayals.

‘Just remember what he has done to you’, Harry thought to himself, determined not to be conned into accepting the old man’s apologies and explanations. ‘He purposely hid the prophecy from you, cutting down your time to prepare and train and indirectly leading to Sirius’ death. He had hidden his family vault from him, not just the money, but the furniture, the weapons, the books on his family history, all of

which were his rightful inheritance and heritage. And finally; he attacked you. Showing the true extent of his manipulation and control, he told his order to take you by force and that is unforgivable, Tonks and Kingsley were your friends and allies and he made you fight and hurt them.

Taking his seat behind his desk, Dumbledore motioned for Harry to sit across from him, before placing his fingers together in his traditional prayer-like gesture and waited for Harry to speak. "You wanted to speak to me headmaster?" Harry enquired, keeping the tone polite but impersonal.

"Harry, I've been very concerned about your behaviour recently. Your actions over the past few weeks and months have been reckless and selfish. You running away has not just endangered your own life, but the lives of the order members assigned to protect and later find you along with potentially everyone else in the wizarding and muggle worlds. You know the prophecy, why would you take such chances?" Dumbledore concluded with a concerned look on his face and waited for Harry to answer.

"No Dumbledore, it was you who put the order members and I in danger when you ordered them to bring me in by force." Harry replied angrily, struggling to keep his voice even and his temper under control, " Look, I left Privet Drive, not because I was running away, but because I thought and still think that it was the right thing to do. I left because I decided to and, even though I always listen to advice from people I respect, in the end I always have the last say in my own life. The last person to have any authority died months ago and as far as I'm concerned that is the end of the matter. This conversation is over."

With that, Harry stood up and with a last glare at Dumbledore's shocked face, stormed right out of the office. Coming out into the corridor, Harry thanked God that he didn't have any lessons that afternoon, there was no way that he would be able to concentrate. Marching through the halls, he made his way back to the Gryffindor common room and, saying the password, entered, going straight up to his dormitory.

Laying face down on his bed, Harry didn't hear anyone come into the room and was unaware of the other presence until he felt the bed under him sag a little as more weight was placed upon it and he heard his name coming from the only source he would have welcomed.

"Harry?" Ginny said, "are you OK?"

Sitting up, Harry looked into the deep brown eyes of the youngest Weasley, trying to decide what he was going to tell her. Seeing only concern on her beautiful face, Harry decided that he had to tell her and heard himself launch into a full explanation. Giving her a quick overview of what had transpired in Dumbledore's office, he paused for a second, hesitating with the information he hadn't told anyone since learning of it himself two months ago. Taking a deep breath, he steeled himself and started to speak once more.

"Ginny, do you remember the prophecy from last year, the one concerning Voldemort and I, the one he was so keen to get his hands on?"

"Off course, but Neville said that it had smashed, he-"

"That was only a record", Harry interrupted, wanting to get this over with, "The prophecy itself was told verbally by a seer just before I was born and someone was there to hear it. That someone was Dumbldore and he told me what it was at the end of last year."

"Well? What did it say?" Ginny asked.

"It said; The one with the power to vanquish the Dark lord approaches...Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies...and the Dark lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark lord knows not...and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives...the one with the power to vanquish the Dark lord will be born as the seventh month dies"

For a brief moment there was a look of confusion on Ginny's face, before realisation dawned as she deciphered the contents of the

prophecy. Her face blanched as she stared at Harry, a look of overwhelming sadness and dread playing on her features. Harry didn't quite know what to do next, not used to dealing with these kind of moments, that problem was soon solved for him however, when Ginny flung herself onto him in a bone-crushing hug.

"You can do it Harry," she said to him as he felt his shirt begin to moisten with her tears, "I know you can."

For the next couple of hours, Harry and Ginny sat on his bed, speaking comfortably to one another, moving subjects from the prophecy to more trivial matters, such as what they thought of their lessons so far and Harry's impending meeting with professor Harding. As the conversation lost its momentum and silence descended upon the friends, Harry looked at Ginny Weasley's beautiful face, taking in her eyes and the glow of her hair as he had every time he had seen her in the last few weeks, and knew that he couldn't hold in his question any longer.

"So Gin", he began, as Ginny met his eyes, showing that she was listening, "I notice that you haven't spent much time with Dean recently."

Ginny looked confused for a second before bursting out laughing. "I'm not going out with Dean, Harry" she replied, "I just said that to annoy Ron."

"Really?" Harry asked, his hopes soaring.

"Yes. We went out a couple of times but it became clear to me that he really wanted somebody else."

"Who?" Harry enquired, his curiosity getting the better of him.

"Lavender." Ginny answered, "Why do you ask about me and Dean anyway?"

Harry braced himself and opened his mouth to speak, knowing that this was the moment of truth when he would be confessing his feelings for Ginny. At that moment, however, the door to the

dormitory opened and bursting in came none other than Ron Weasley stopping short at the sight of Harry and Ginny. Seemingly coming to a decision, Ron looked between the two of them, before looking at Harry right in the eyes, for the first time since they had been back at Hogwarts, "Harry", he said, "We need to talk."

Harry was about to respond with a well chosen insult, when Ginny gave him a reassuring smile, before rising onto her feet and walking out of the room.

"So how as your summer then mate?" Harry asked Ron sarcastically, "Mine was OK, you know except the bit where my best friend didn't defend me when I was being accused of being a dark wizard. Oh and the bit where said friend then drew his wand on me for fighting my corner and finally the bit where one Ron Weasley did nothing while the order of the phoenix was being ordered to bring me in by force. Yes I know about that." Harry added, seeing the look of shock on Ron's face.

"Did Ginny tell you about that? She -"

"You leave Ginny out of this", Harry replied angrily, "if you've realised what a complete prat you've been again, then shouldn't you be apologising and explaining how it is you came to betray your best friend?"

"I'm sorry Harry, I really am." Ron said, looking desperately remorseful, "I know there's no excuse and I know you would never turn to the dark it's just Hermione-"

"That's the problem isn't it? Hermione. You go along with whatever she says and does because you want to make her like you, you've been practically in love with her for five years and you're still waiting for her to ask you out so you don't have to put your neck on the line. I've got to tell you mate, you seriously need to make a trip to along the yellow brick road and get yourself some courage because you're letting the Gryffindor end down. Look, I haven't forgiven you but you apologising is a good first step, now I have to go, I have a meeting."

With that, Harry walked out of the dormitory, leaving Ron not knowing what to think. Coming out into the common room, he spotted Ginny in one of the sofas and gave her a smile.

“Wish me luck”, he said

“Good luck”, Ginny replied.

Just as he was crawling out of the portrait, he saw Ginny rise from her spot on the sofa and walk in the direction of his dormitory doubtlessly to give Ron a piece of her mind. Shaking his head with a smile, Harry continued out of the doorway and started to make his way to the Defence against the Dark arts classroom. Reaching the door of the classroom Harry raised his hand and knocked,

“Come in Harry”, said a voice from inside the class.

Entering the room, Harry saw that his teacher was in his office which adjoined the classroom. Feeling more sure of himself as he saw the professor wave him through, Harry walked into the office and took a seat as motioned by Harding.

“Welcome Harry, do you want anything to drink or a snack?”, the professor asked, smiling cheerfully at Harry,

“No thanks, I’m fine professor.”

“Professor! I’m still not used to that, so how did I do on my first lesson? I know that you for one appreciate the importance of good duelling skills. I’ve heard that half of my class have you to thank for them passing their OWLs.”

“You did great professor, but the DA was just out of necessity, I just went through some basics.” Harry replied to the enthusiastic teacher.

“Modesty, now that’s definitely from your mother.”

Harry’s head snapped up at the mention of his mother and, in his rush he practically shouted his next question. “You knew my mother? And you knew the marauders as well right? Were you one of them?”

Harding laughed at Harry's quick fire questions. "I knew you wanted to get to that, I thought you might just need a push. Yes, I knew your parents, and the rest of the marauders for that matter, very well but no, I wasn't one of them. That honour belonged solely to Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot and Prongs. I was especially close to your father though, you see, he was a few years above me in school and was always kind of my idol"

"Really?" Harry asked

"Are you kidding? He was talented, powerful and popular with the girls, everyone would want to be like him. And he once really helped me out in first year, it's a long story but it involves a bully problem, James and the teaching of some very nasty curses. When I graduated I went into Auror academy, this was at the height of the war and the academy was racing people through to get more agents out into the field. James took care of me and showed me the ropes, he befriended me again and introduced me to all of his friends. Then, weeks before the end of the war, he did something for me for which I will be forever in his debt. He saved my life."

Harry thought about the professor's story and realised that he still hadn't told him why he had rescued him from the order, what the cave was, how he knew where he was and how he knew that he wanted to escape. His curiosity over how the story finished however, overweighed his other questions as he replied to his teacher; "How did he save your life."

"Well, like I said, it was only a couple of weeks before the end of the war and Voldemort was really starting to come out into the open. One day, we got a call through to the office that he was attacking Hogsmeade, now we thought this was the big one, we were getting information that Voldemort was rapidly gaining in power after a series of dark rituals and we thought that he was finally going for the ultimate target; Hogwarts. The whole office was sent down to Hogsmeade where we were met by hundreds of Death eaters and dark creatures who quickly engaged us in combat. I had taken out a few of them when, all of a sudden I found myself standing in a clearing, faced with none other than Voldemort himself. I raised my wand but I knew that I didn't have a hope in hell's chance of lasting so

much as a second. At that moment though, there was a pop and in front of me, apparated your father, sending off a powerful stunner as he appeared which Voldemort quickly had to erect a shield to defend himself against. James then started duelling with him, sending off spells more powerful and more quickly than I had ever seen in my life, while at the same time defending the both of us from Voldemort's attacks. This lasted for about a minute and, as you know Harry, a minute is a long time against Voldemort, James was starting to wear down and, though I had fired a few spells and fought off some surrounding Death eaters, I had a feeling that pretty soon we would be somewhat more horizontal and less alive than we were. Luckily though, Dumbldore had spotted us and came in time to repel Voldemort and save the both of us. I have no doubts whatsoever in my mind, Harry, that had James not appeared when he did, I wouldn't be here speaking with you today."

Harry was shocked at Harding's story, he had heard about his father before and he had even heard some of his adventures as an auror from Sirius and Remus, but from what Harding had told him, his Dad had purposefully put himself in an almost certainly lethal situation just on the off chance that he might be able to save a friend. He felt a stab of pride and loss at the thought of his father and realised that the professor was looking at him. Feeling a little guilty, Harry just had to hear more of his parent and once more delayed the more pressing questions.

Harry and Harding talked for over two hours, well it was mainly Harding who talked as Harry listened, both to new and old stories of his parents and the marauders. Laughing and joking, Harding told of the adventures with as much excitement and enthusiasm as Sirius, even acting out some of the funnier happenings and discussions between his parents. Coming to an end of one of his anecdotes, Harding paused and for a second, looking Harry straight in the eyes;

"Is there something on your mind Harry? I'm sure you have some questions to ask."

"Well professor-"

"Please Harry, we've spent the last two hours joking around and drinking Butterbeer, when we're alone you can call me Thane," Harding cut in.

"OK, Thane," Harry said, feeling a little strange addressing his professor as an equal, he still had trouble with Remus. "How did you know where I was and that I wanted to escape? And, for that matter, why did you help me?"

"I helped you Harry, because I owe James, not only my life, but my undying loyalty for his friendship and, seeing as I couldn't repay the favour, that now passes on to you. I also happen to agree with you, I assumed that you wanted to train for the upcoming war and your inevitable battle with Voldemort and I knew that the old marauder hideaway would be perfect. As for how I knew, Dumbledore told me himself along with the rest of the order."

"You're in the order of the- wait, what did you say about me and Voldemort? What has Dumbledore told you?"

Thane smiled, "Yes Harry, I am in the Order As for what Dumbledore has told me, I don't know what your talking about. All I know is that history tends to repeat itself, at first I thought it would be your Grandfather, he was a very powerful wizard, and then your father. But now I know that it must be you, Voldemort is the last and only heir of Slytherin Harry, it is inevitable that he will meet his downfall at the hands of the only heir of Gryffindor."

Harry found himself walking back to Gryffindor common room at eight O'clock that night. His feet trudged the journey unconsciously as his mind raced with the implications of what he had just been told. The five minutes following Professor Harding's announcement had been followed by nothing but silence as Harry tried to comprehend what had been said. Whether it was true. Why he hadn't been told. And most importantly what the news meant for him.

In a way Harry wasn't as shocked as he felt he ought to be. He felt that his unconscious mind had been trying to tell him all along, but he, as usual, was too dense to read the signs. Harry thought back to his second year, internally flinching at having to relive one of the worst moments of his life, the moment when he thought, just for a second, that Ginny might be gone and there was nothing that he could do about it. He thought over Dumbledore's following words with a new understanding and with it further anger at the old man. 'Only a true Gryffindor could have pulled that out of the hat'.

So Dumbledore knew, 'Of course he did', Harry thought to himself, 'he seems to know practically everything about my life and as usual is wary of sharing it with me. Even the prophecy was forced out of him.' Snapping out of his reverie, Harry found himself in front of the portrait of the fat lady, protecting the entrance to Gryffindor tower, the occupant of the painting looking particularly impatient. "Lion's Mane", Harry spoke the new password and walked forward into the common room as the portrait swung forward to grant him entry.

Stopping short of the common room proper, Harry tapped his wand on his head, silently performing the disillusionment charm on himself before continuing into the room and up the stairs into his dormitory. He was in no mood to talk tonight. Settling himself on his bed and keeping the charm in place, Harry reached into his trunk and pulled out one of the books he had brought from his family vault and not yet had the time to read. The book entitled; 'The Potter family history'.

Turning to the front page, Harry unfolded a large piece of parchment to unveil his own family tree. Placing the parchment on his bed, he started to trace back from his own name at the bottom, up past his father and Grandfather and onto his more distant ancestors. Searching for a full five minutes, Harry's finger finally came to a halt

towards the top of the parchment. Marked clearly there, was his great x8 Grandfather Lord Godric Gryffindor.

Collapsing down on to his back, Harry realised that his destiny had been set long before Sybill Trelawney had made her prophecy. Slytherin versus Gryffindor. It had gone on throughout the ages for a thousand years or more and it had to end with him, one way or another. Laying back on his back, Harry suddenly realised that he was brooding again, something he hadn't done since the first week of the holidays. This new revelation didn't change anything, he had known that he had to kill Voldemort before this and that was exactly the same now.

Rising from his bed, Harry made his over to his trunk and climbed inside, determined to get back to work. This had been the longest time he had gone without training for six weeks and he knew that no matter how far he had come, he still had a long way to go. Animating the magical dummies, Harry adopted a duelling stance, bowed to the dummies and began to fight.

He emerged from his trunk hours later, feeling somewhat satisfied with himself. The training, he knew, had made him a formidable fighter, he had managed to smash his previous records for duelling, dispatching multiple enemies in record time. Having worked up a sweat, Harry had then settled himself onto the floor and began to meditate, clearing his mind and reaching out to his magic to prepare for what he was about to attempt. Having relaxed and now being able to perceptibly sense his magical core, Harry slowly stood and animated one of the dummies once more. Steadying his wand, he took careful aim at the approaching figure and summoning forth all of his power and concentration, shouted; "Pertrificus Totalus!"

Harry then watched, with a smile on his lips, as the red bolt of the stunning curse flew from his wand, striking the dummy in the chest. The beam seemed to spread over the dummies body and time seemed to slow as it stood there perfectly still. Only two seconds passed but to Harry it seemed like a lifetime as he waited anxiously, the dummy collapsed. He let out a relieved sigh and smiled at his handiwork, only then realising how exhausted he was. Conjuring himself some water, he sat down on the duelling room floor and had a

drink, relaxing for all of two minutes before rising again and 'enervating' the dummy to start over again.

So lying in bed at two in the morning, Harry knew that it was time to put the next phase of his plan into operation. Tomorrow night, for the first time since Sirius' death, he would call upon the DA. Harry slept easily that night, secure in the knowledge that soon his own army would rise to meet the forces of the dark lord and led by him, they would somehow find a way to take him down.

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Harry awoke early the next morning, having had only four hours sleep, to begin his new daily ritual of running laps around the park. Coming in after his workout, he then showered and dressed before making his way down to the hall for breakfast. Entering the hall, Harry glanced over the Gryffindor table to spot Ginny near the middle, eating some jam on toast. Seeing him looking her way, Ginny waved him over and Harry sat down next to her.

"What happened to you last night?" Ginny asked, "I never saw you get back from your meeting with Harding"

"I've got something pretty big to talk to you about Gin' but not right here." Harry replied, leaning towards her so no one else could hear, "I need you to do something for me.

"What is it?" Ginny enquired

"I need you to gather the DA together. I can't risk drawing the attention to myself, but I would really appreciate it if you could tell them that there will be a meeting this evening at six. But, and this is important Ginny, only get people you're sure we can trust."

"Ron and Hermione?"

"Tell Ron, but make sure that he knows he's not to tell Hermione. It can be a little test for him to see where his loyalty lies."

Ginny nodded before turning back to her breakfast. The next thing she said was completely unrelated as if the previous conversation had never happened and they spent the remainder of breakfast talking about the finer points of quidditch and whether the 'Chudley Cannon's' newly adopted 'hawks head' formation was effective. Finishing off his egg and soldiers, Harry looked at his watch to see that he only had five minutes before the start of his first lesson and so, saying goodbye to Ginny, he quickly began in the direction of the potions classroom in the dungeons.

Harry arrived outside the class just in time as Snape opened the door and, glaring at the Gryffindors and any other non-Slytherins that dared to take his class, silently beckoned them to follow him in. Taking his seat near the back, Harry saw that there really were very few non-Slytherins and even fewer Gryffindors, numbering only three in the class of around thirty. Only he, Hermione and Pavarti Patil, it seemed, both attained the mandatory O grade and actually wanted to come back.

Harry's attention was brought back to the front as Snape banged his wand on the blackboard at the front and spindly, untidy writing started to form where previously there was none.

"The Curatio potion" Snape began, "is an advanced healing potion, capable of healing large and deep gashes, as well as disinfecting the wound of all minor and medium poisons and bacterium. It has saved countless wizarding lives over the years and will be a large part of your overall NEWT mark in two years time. The potion is complex and subtle, two things that seem to baffle some."

Harry didn't flinch as Snape's penetrating gaze fell onto him and Snape, looking a little put out, continued. "The instructions are on the board, it should take one and a half hours exactly to make and a further month to brew. Once completed I will be looking for a volunteer to test their own potion. You have until the end of the lesson, Begin."

Harry made sure that he read the instructions written on the board very carefully before he began adding ingredients to his cauldron, he had a nasty feeling that he knew who that volunteer was going to be.

Satisfied that he knew what he was doing, Harry went to the supply cupboard and took out a small vial of dragons blood which he promptly tipped into his cauldron.

The next hour and a half saw Harry carefully carrying out every instruction on the board, following every command to the letter until, just as the bell to signal the end of the lesson rang, he stepped back to see that his potion was a glittering electric blue, giving out copious amounts of silver smoke just as, he was pleased to note, Hermione's was. So, feeling particularly satisfied at the look on Snape's face as he handed over his completed potion, Harry exited the classroom and made his way to lunch.

After a quick lunch and a largely useless and boring charms lesson, Harry decided to skip dinner and walked up to the seventh floor and, passing three times past an empty wall, entered the room known as the room of requirements. Thinking of what he would need for this; the training grounds for his new army, Harry first of all decided to add a duelling platform resembling the one in his magical trunk. He then went on to add a stage at the front where he could talk to his troops and various cushions, books and other useful items for his training.

At ten minutes to six, the door to the room opened for the first time and in walked Ginny Weasley along with a five or six people who Harry recognised to be some of her friends from her year. As the others, a few of whom were from the old DA, looked around the new room, Ginny walked up to the front and onto the stage where Harry was sitting, waiting patiently.

"The place certainly looks different," Ginny commented, "but I like it. So any chance of telling me what we're going to be doing this evening?"

"You remember me telling you on the train that I would be training an army to go up against the death eaters?" Ginny nodded, "Well it starts tonight. Just you wait and see Gin' this isn't going to be just a school club. Not anymore."

Ginny seemed to want to ask something more but was halted as the door opened again and masses of people started to file in. Looking at

the clock on the far wall, Harry saw that it was two minutes past six and decided to wait just a few more minutes for any latecomers. Just then, he saw Ron walk somewhat timidly into the room and, seeing Harry on the stage, started to walk over to him.

"Harry-", he began.

"We'll talk later Ron." Harry said, cutting him off and leaving no room for argument. Ron just nodded and walked back from the stage followed by Ginny as the group, starting to get restless, gathered round the stage. Harry, seeing that it was almost ten past six, stood up and raised his hands for quiet, much like Dumbledore had done at the welcoming feast. The result too was identical and instantaneous as the three dozen odd people fell silent, staring up at him in anticipation.

"Welcome", Harry said, feeling slightly unnerved, "I have brought you all here today to address the issue of war. Lord Voldemort has been gathering his forces for over a year now and he is ready. The phoney war is over. His troops are amassed, they're trained and they're coming to get you. And if they come they do will destroy not only your lives but the lives of everyone you ever cared about, everyone you didn't particularly care about and everyone you never even knew existed. Men, women, children, the death eaters don't discriminate, they just kill and if the dark lord and his forces succeed the world as you know it will cease to be."

Harry was happy to see that his words seemed to have had the desired effect as all forty of them looked absolutely horrified and more than a little scared.

"So what shall we do?" Harry continued, "We could ignore it, pretend that it isn't happening and that we are all safe in this magically protected fortress. But the thing is, no building is invincible and, though it may take a week, it may take ten years, Voldemort will eventually break down the wards protecting us. We could join him, then our lives would be secure, but I don't know about you lot but I'm not really the killing type and all that torture and blindly following orders? I don't think so. And so we come to the third option. We fight. No being on this planet is immortal. Lord Voldemort, no matter how

powerful he has become and no matter how much more powerful he will become in the future, is still human and that means he can be killed. And I plan on having a hand in that. Now you don't have to worry about Voldemort, he is not your responsibility, others will take care of him. What you have to worry about is the hundreds of death eaters and dark creatures behind him, all of whom would give just about anything to rip you to pieces. They need stopping and for this reason I, Harry Potter, am raising an army to fight against these dark forces, to protect the freedoms of everyone on the planet and I want you, my friends, to be that army."

With that Harry drew his speech to a close and looked out over the shocked, scared, but awe-struck faces and was surprised when Ginny started to clap, beaming at him from the front row. As they overcame the initial shock, others started to join in and soon the whole room was applauding Harry, who, unsure of what to do, raised his hands for silence once more.

"There is much to do but, before we get started I feel the need to offer each and every one of you the chance to walk out of that door. The mission we are about to embark upon will be a difficult one and some of you will be hurt or even die for the cause, but if you truly believe in what we're fighting for, the risk will be obsolete."

Not one person moved and Harry smiled. "Good, now before we begin today's training, I'm sure you all appreciate the need for discretion and, therefore, I will need to make sure that no one speaks to anyone of this outside this room."

Harry then lined up the members of the new DA, now called the 'Defence Association' and, one by one, performed a complex spell on them to ensure that they would be unable to speak about the business of the DA to anyone who didn't already know of its existence and even then not within hearing distance of such a person. Having completed the spell on all forty of his new soldiers, Harry took to the stage again and said "Let us begin."

The next hour was spent with Harry going over the basics and was soon glad that he had started in this way. It occurred to him that although the DA had come a long way from last year, they still didn't

really know how to deal with a combat situation. He was just glad that Thane was taking care of the duelling side for him, so he could focus on the spell technique and preparing them mentally for the horrors that they would undoubtedly be going through over the next couple of years.

Calling a halt to the sporadic shouts of “Stupefy!” and “Protego!”, Harry called everyone to the front once more to move on to the next, equally important part of their training.

“It is quite possible, even probable, that one day, maybe tomorrow, maybe years from now, that someone will use an unforgivable curse on you.” Harry began, “Now for the first two, until we progress a lot further into your training at least, just do yourselves a favour and get the hell out of the way. For the third, however, there is something that I can do to help you stop it, help you fight it. Ginny could you come up to the stage please?”

Ginny did as she was asked and, looking more than a little nervous, but flashing him a smile anyway, approached Harry on the stage.

“This won’t hurt a bit Gin”, Harry said to her, smiling back as he drew his wand from his pocket. Focusing on Ginny’s eyes, Harry took aim and heard a gasp from the on looking group as he said the word; “Imperio!” Harry felt some resistance from Ginny’s natural mental defences before, using his leglimency talents and what he had read about in some of the more obscure books in his collection, he managed to break through them and felt Ginny’s mind clear, falling under his control as if she was simply an extension of his own body. Satisfied that he was in control Harry merely thought the words ‘Jump on the spot Ginny’ and she immediately complied.

Having achieved what he wanted, Harry slowly withdrew from Ginny’s mind, helping to replace her mental blockades as he went. Looking in to Ginny’s eyes as she returned to her self, Harry whispered the words “Thanks Gin, if I thought there was any other way to teach you this stuff I would.”

Looking slightly shaken up, Ginny replied “ No problem Harry, I trust you.” And returned to her place in the crowd.

Turning back to his audience, Harry's gaze was immediately drawn to Ron's face which was contorted with anger amongst the expressions of mixed fear and respect on the faces of his peers. "Not nice." Harry began. "But necessary. If you are not prepared, if you do not know how to fight this form of attack, then Voldemort will rip through you mind as easily as scissors through paper and he will bend you to his will and force you to do his bidding and, though Hogwarts and the ministry may disagree, I for one think that a little fear and pain is no excuse for letting you off training for that eventuality. Now if you will all line up one by one, I will test all of you before helping you refine and strengthen your mental barriers and your resistance to the curse until you are unmovable."

The rest of the lesson was spent in this fashion, with Harry breaking into people's minds with varying degrees of what was nevertheless always relative ease. Eventually he came to the back of the line and faced his old best friend. Noting that Ron still looked slightly annoyed, despite the explanation he had given to his troops Harry quietly muttered, "If I thought for a second that it wasn't better for her in the long run Ron, then I wouldn't have even considered doing it." Ron nodded in response, before bracing himself for Harry's attack.

"You can reveal yourself Dobby" Harry said in to the apparently empty classroom. It was now eight O'clock and Harry was alone in the room, everyone having left after Harry had dismissed them, all slightly shaken at being forcefully manipulated to another's will and determined that it would never happen again. Harry had then started to wait for his next appointment with his first and currently only spy.

Dobby materialised into the room and stood as if waiting for something.

"Sit down Dobby" Harry said, motioning towards the table which had just appeared in front of them with two cups of pumpkin juice. "What information have you got for me?"

Dobby took a sip of his drink, getting before replying, "There has just been a big meeting of headmaster Dumbledore's order Harry Potter sir."

“What about Dobby?” Harry asked, “Have you got anymore information about the object?”

“No Harry Potter sir. The meeting was about the lack of information master Snape has been bringing lately. Dumbledore is thinking that he who must not be named is getting suspicious of master Snape’s allegiances.”

“That or he is planning something big and doesn’t want his spy to reveal any of the details.”

“Dobby is thinking the same Harry Potter sir. I is not liking master Snape he is being mean to Harry Potter and his friends. Headmaster Dumbledore is still trusting master Snape and he is taking him out of he who must not be named’s death eaters.”

“Dumbledore is taking his only spy in Voldemort’s inner circle out?”

“That’s right Harry Potter sir. I is hearing him saying that some of his lesser spies is trying to get promoted.”

“Well thanks Dobby” Harry said, rising from his seat and walking towards the door, “Keep me informed and I’ll talk to you later but now I have a few things to take care of. Thanks for the information.”

“It is no problem Harry Potter sir.” Dobby replied “Dobby is honoured to serve the great Harry Potter”

With that and a low bow, Dobby then disappeared with a pop, leaving Harry alone in the room once more. Going over the information he had just received and it’s possible implications in his head, Harry donned his invisibility cloak and shook himself out of his reverie, reminding himself that he still had things to do and it was getting late. Walking out of the room of requirements, Harry made his way up to Gryffindor tower and his dormitory, checking that he was alone before taking of his cloak. Happy that he had some privacy, he went to the foot of his bed and opened the duelling arena compartment of his trunk and went inside.

"Hello Peter." Harry said calmly to the small, pathetic looking man that now filled the cage in place of the rat Harry had thrown in there two days ago. He had given himself three hours to talk to the rat aware that, as always, he was pressed for time but also knowing that it was imperative he gained as much information as he could about Voldemort's forces.

"How nice to see you again." Harry continued, pleased to note the unconcealed look of pure terror etched on Wormtail's face, "Now I have a few questions for you so what do you say we get you out of that cage and have a nice sit down." Wormtail did not reply, trembling from head to toe as Harry unlocked the cage door and grabbed him roughly by the collar.

Taking out his wand, Harry conjured a table and two chairs, sat opposite each other as he had seen in so many police shows. With Pettigrew still held tightly in his grasp, Harry dragged him over to the table, throwing the rat down on to a seat as he took the seat opposite. "Now I'm going to give you a simple choice Peter", Harry started, his eyes narrowed and now very much in 'bad cop' mode, "Just over two years ago I saved your life from the wands of your two ex school friends. Now we have come full circle, you are going to answer all of my questions, telling me everything you know or I am going to take it away from you."

"I can't -" Peter began, before being sharply cut off by a back handed slap to the face, knocking him off of his chair. Harry then promptly and wandlessly levitated him back up to the table.

"That's not what I want to hear Peter", Harry said, his voice steady but threatening, "What kind of numbers does Voldemort have at his disposal? How many death eaters and how many dark creatures and of what species?"

"I told you I can't-" Pettigrew was sent flying off his chair again, this time by the blast of a powerful stinging hex from Harry's wandless hand. Writhing in pain on the floor from the force of the blast and sharp, excruciating stinging pain on his face, Harry picked Wormtail up off the floor and threw him against the wall.

“I’M GETTING TIRED OF THIS PETER,” Harry yelled, his eyes shining bright emerald in his fury, “ANSWER THE QUESTION”,

Harry drew his wand from his robes and levelled it at the traitorous, cowardly little man still lying in agony on the floor.

“NOW.”

“Whatever you can do to me”, Peter croaked out, “the dark lord can do worse.”

“Then have it your way.” Harry replied, again speaking quietly and calmly but in just as threatening a manner.

Extending his left hand in front of him, Harry magically picked the rat off the floor so they were eye to eye and levelled his wand at him. Concentrating hard on Wormtail’s beady, little eyes, he said,

“Leglimens!”

Harry easily smashed his way through whatever mental barriers Wormtail had, entering his inner most thoughts and searching for the information he wanted. Seeing a promising memory, Harry came to a halt in his search and inwardly gasped at what he saw, hundreds of death eaters lined up and at attention in front of the dark lord. It was not this that shocked him, however, flanking the death eaters were thousands upon thousands of dark creatures. Most prominent amongst these were the dementors, floating eerily around the large cave-like room in which they were gathered, but there were also trolls, giants, banshees, acromantula, inferi and even some dragons and quintapedes.

Reeling from the shock, Harry withdrew from Wormtail’s mind and shook himself. Recovering slightly, he looked at Wormtail who was slumped on the ground once more,

“How many?” he asked quietly. There was no answer. “HOW MANY?”

“I can’t tell you.” Wormtail sobbed.

Aiming his wand at him, Harry spoke dangerously, determined to get the information.

"We can do this the easy way or the hard way Wormtail. Now, how many of each creature has Voldemort recruited in to his army?"

"I won't-"

"Imperio!" Harry entered Wormtail's mind once more but this time, kept his perception of the real world as he felt him bend to his will.

"Answer my question." Harry said commandingly into Pettigrew's mind.

He replied in a monotone, speaking without emotion and as if he didn't know what he was saying;

"The dark lord now has a total of 870 death eaters, along with hundreds more sympathisers and traitors. The dementors number 1200, and he has 500 trolls, 280 giants, 300 banshees, 100 acromantula, 600 inferi, 35 dragons and 20 quintapeds. He is still recruiting all over the world and I have reason to believe that there are additional creatures that I don't know of."

Harry tried to take all of this in, for the first time, truly comprehending what an enormous task he was about to embark upon.

"And now, Wormtail, for the million pound question. What is the object that Voldemort is trying to find on some distant island?"

"I don't know" Peter replied, "but I overheard the dark lord saying that it would make Dumbledore's and Potter's power pale in comparison to his."

"So it is an object to make himself more powerful."

"That is what I assumed"

Having got all of the information he was going to out of Wormtail, Harry released him from the spell to receive a shocked and fearful look on the rat's face.

"Thank you Peter," Harry said, "you have been most helpful".

With that, Harry levitated Pettigrew back in to his cell and, magicking some more food and water in with him, locked the door before climbing out of his trunk.

Re-entering his dormitory, Harry was shocked to see Ginny sat on his bed, apparently waiting for him. Spotting him, she cut off anything he was about to say to her,

"Harry where have you been? I was looking everywhere for you."

"I was speaking to an old friend Gin'" Harry replied. Ginny looked puzzled but comprehension quickly dawned on her.

"What did he say?" She asked, "did you get anymore information on Voldemort?"

"You really don't want to know." Harry replied, "Tom has increased his forces exponentially and is recruiting more and more every day. Death eaters, dragons, banshees, you name it he's got it. And in addition to that Dumbledore is withdrawing Snape from his position in the inner circle. He seems to think that Voldemort is on to them. That or Snape has picked a side and Voldemort doesn't want Dumbledore to have any information. This leaves the order with just a couple of low-level death eaters as spies."

"So what are we going to do?", Ginny asked.

"Well I am going spy hunting. If the order doesn't have them then we need them."

"I'm coming with you", Ginny replied determinedly

"Ginny", Harry said, "this is going to be a dangerous mission. It would mean potentially putting you in massive danger."

"Well I am in your army aren't I?" Ginny asked, "...sir" she added playfully while raising her right hand in a salute.

"There's no way I'm going to win this argument is there?" Harry asked with a smile.

"No. In fact I would say that it was less an argument and more me telling you what is going to happen."

Harry shook his head disbelievingly at the small red head's stubbornness, "Fine, you can come. But you have to stay with me under the invisibility cloak."

"Fine with me." Ginny responded.

Five minutes later, Harry and Ginny were both under the invisibility cloak, huddled together so that no part of them was exposed. Harry undoubtedly could have cast spells on the both of them to make them invisible but he didn't want to expend too much magical energy before the possible upcoming conflict (he told himself). The two of them made their way down the several sets of stairs separating Gryffindor tower from the great hall and then descended once more in to the dungeons.

They came to a halt fifteen minutes after they had started their journey in front of a stretch of bare, damp, stone wall.

"Now what?" Ginny asked, looking confused.

"Now, we wait." Harry replied.

Thirteen minutes later, as Harry predicted would happen at some point, two Slytherins came walking past them, unaware of their presence. Going up to the stretch of wall, one of them said; "Basilisk" and a stone door appeared allowing entry to the dormitory. Not wanting to bump in to them or otherwise alert them that he and Ginny were there, Harry waited a minute or two before walking up to the wall, whispering the password and entering the Slytherin dormitory closely followed by Ginny.

“Harry, what are we doing here?” Ginny whispered as they entered the common room.

Harry raised a hand in response, telling her to be patient as he looked around, seemingly searching for something. Suddenly, he found what he was looking for and set off again in a purposeful stride towards the sixth year dormitory, Ginny jogging to keep up with him.

Reaching the door, Harry slowly pushed the door open, wincing as it creaked and the loud snoring of the sixth year Slytherins seemed to falter. They both froze, keeping perfectly still and hoping that they hadn't just given themselves away. Much to their relief, however, after a few agonising seconds the snoring started once more and the two of them proceeded into the room.

Now in the dormitory and looking out over the sleeping Slytherins Harry removed the cloak from him and Ginny and drew his wand, pointing it at the nearest Slytherin.

“What are you doing?”

“I told you,” Harry replied, “I’m getting us some spies, what better place to start than the Slytherins?”

“But how do we know we can trust them? Most Slytherins are evil, cowardly morons.”

“Exactly,” Harry said, grinning at her, “Most of them, so all we have to do is sort out the baddies from the goodies.”

“And how, exactly, do you propose to do that?”

“Just watch and learn, Gin”

With that, Harry whispered the word “Leglimens!”, Skimming the minds of the Slytherins, Harry found that Ginny was right, though not all of them were death eater supporters, he doubted any of them would be brave enough or care enough to help them in their war effort. He was about to give up when he came to the penultimate

student. Next to the bed marked 'Draco Malfoy' was one marked 'Blaise Zabini', filled with a tall dark haired guy who Harry recognised as one of the more bearable Slytherins, it was Zabini that gave him pause for thought.

Wading through his mind, Harry found that, though his Uncle was in the dark lord's inner circle and he Blaise himself had no love for muggle-borns, he hated the way the death eaters degraded themselves and thought that genocide was a little over the top for what he considered an irritation. Harry withdrew from Blaise' mind smiling to himself If he could get him to help, Blaise Zabini would be the perfect spy, privy to all of them information from the Slytherin common room and with a death eater in the family.

He was just about to turn to tell Ginny when he remembered that Zabini was not the last person in the room. 'What the hell' Harry thought, now steadying his wand at Malfoy, keen to see what the junior death eater might be hiding. Entering Malfoy's mind, Harry began to look for some memories or thoughts that might give him some information. All of a sudden he saw something, it looked like Malfoy clad in death eater robes and kneeling before Voldemort. Harry tried to get a closer look at it but came up against something he never had before: resistance. Malfoy was pushing back against him, trying to force him out of his mind. Afraid that he had given himself away, Harry quickly withdrew from Draco's mind, praying that he was still asleep and what he had come up against was his natural mental defences.

Snapping back in to reality, Harry breathed a sigh of relief and lowered his wand as he saw that Malfoy was still fast asleep. At that moment, however, the blonde Slytherin sat up in his bed, grabbing his wand and pointing it at Harry in the process, glaring at the two Gryffindors as he analysed the situation. Harry, meanwhile, had also raised his wand, his tuned reflexes quickly reacting to the situation. Harry and Malfoy now found themselves in a Mexican standoff with Ginny stood to one side not sure what to do. She was very aware that her making any sudden movements could start things off and, as powerful as Harry had become, Malfoy was also a skilled wizard and she didn't want to risk anything.

“Ginny back away to the door”, Harry told her, his eyes glowing a dangerous emerald green as he continued to glare at his old enemy.

“Stay where you are.” Malfoy countered.

Ginny looked unsure of themselves, glancing at Harry she saw looking him at her out of the corner of his eye while still keeping a watch on Malfoy’s wand. Seeing the look in his eyes, Ginny began to back away, her hand lingering around her pocket and her wand as she herself stared at the young Slytherin.

“Ginny run!” Harry shouted as he saw Malfoy’s wand begin to move in her direction. At his shout, Malfoy turned back to Harry, firing what Harry recognised as the Sectumsempra curse.

“Aegis Ultimus!” Harry shouted,

the hex hitting the stronger protego charm which he had conjured. Ginny went for her wand to help in the fight but she never got a spell away as Harry wordlessly shot the ‘expelliarmus’ spell at Malfoy, catching him by surprise. The red beam struck Malfoy in the chest and he was thrown back in to the wall above his bed disarmed in the process.

Ginny ran over to Harry and hugged him, adrenalin still coursing through her from the conflict. Looking around she had a shocked expression on her face.

“How the hell are they still asleep?” She asked, bewildered.

“Wandless, wordless silencio,” he said motioning around him where the air seemed to be shimmering in a field around them. “Why did you think it took me so long to take care of a punk like Malfoy?”

Ginny just shook her head, not knowing how you were meant to respond to something like that.

“Come on,” Harry continued, “let’s see if Mr. Zabini is willing to help us.”

With that, Harry pointed his wand at Blaise and shot out the stunning curse, knocking him out so they could take him somewhere to talk in silence.

-o

“Wake up Blaise”.

It was fifteen minutes later and with the help of some weightless spells, Harry and Ginny had brought Zabini to the room of requirements before negating the effects of the ‘stupefy’ curse with a simple ‘enervate’. Taking in his surroundings, Blaise jumped up, glaring around frightened and angry, finally looking at Harry and Ginny.

“What the hell did you do Potter?” He demanded.

“Blaise I’m going to be straight with you; I need your help,” Harry replied, “Sit down, this could take a while.” Harry went on to explain about the DA and the war effort against Voldemort, he then went on to tell him how he knew that he could trust him and what Harry wanted him to do for them.

“So let me get this straight, you infiltrated my mind and kidnapped me and now you want me to risk my life spying on one of the most powerful wizards ever to walk the planet to protect a bunch of mud-bloods and blood traitors?”

“Yes,” Harry replied, “That’s pretty much exactly what I want.”

Blaise seemed to think for a minute before replying, “It’s true that I don’t have any love for Voldemort and his slaves but that doesn’t mean I want to kill myself over it.” He paused, “OK Potter, I’ll agree to help you if you tell me this, what’s in it for me?”

‘Typical Slytherin,’ Harry thought, “How about honour and integrity and the fact that you’ll be doing the right thing?”

“Good, but not enough. The way I see it this is a job, I want paying.”

"Your rich anyway Zabini," Ginny said, speaking for the first time since Blaise had awoken, "We're not a firm trying to employ you, this is war-"

Harry held his hand up to stop Ginny, thinking carefully, "Alright Blaise, I can pay you fifty galleons a month. And for that I expect regular updates from the Slytherin common room as well as any information you can get from your death eater uncle. So do we have a deal?"

"Deal." Blaise replied, smirking as he shook Harry's hand, "Now if you don't mind I'd like to get back to bed."

"There's a DA meeting next week, Friday at six, be there." Harry told Blaise's retreating back. He raised a hand in acknowledgement and left the room, leaving Harry alone with Ginny.

"Why did you agree to pay him?" Ginny asked, "This is a war we shouldn't have to bribe people to stand up for what is right."

"I know Gin and I agree but he's an invaluable asset and, even if I don't like it, it was the only way to get him to agree to the job. If it helps just consider him a professional soldier and be secure in the knowledge that you're a bigger person than he is."

"Great," Ginny said grinning, "before you said that I was going to try and convince you that I was in need of payment."

"Sorry." Harry replied, smiling back, "But anyway, we still have more to do, before I go to bed I want one last conversation with the rat."

-o-

Entering his trunk once more, Harry walked up to the cage, Ginny following him and watching, confused at what he was going to do. Harry for his part, when asked, simply told her that he wanted to test out a theory. Clearing his throat, Harry spoke directly to Wormtail;

"Peter Pettigrew", he began in a formal voice, "you are enslaved in a blood debt to me for saving your life, I command you to jump ."

Wormtail, just stared at Harry looking confused and frightened before, seemingly independent of him, his legs bent and he jumped on the spot, met by a smile from Harry and a confused look from Ginny.

"Have you just wasted a blood debt on making him jump in the air?" Ginny asked incredulously.

"Of course not." Harry replied, "It's a life debt, the trade isn't even nearly even, I have Wormtail in the palm of my hand until the debt is fully repaid." After saying this, he turned towards Pettigrew and spoke once more.

"Peter Pettigrew, you are enslaved to a blood debt to me for saving your life, I command that when I release you, you will return to the death eater ranks. You will tell Lord Voldemort and anyone else that asks that you were chased by the aurors and decided to lay low for a while. You will then spy on Voldemort and the death eater's actions and report back to me on any information you have found when it is safe to do so, without letting anyone know what you are doing. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir." Wormtail replied, a vacant look on his face as if he was under the influence of Veritaserum.

"Good. And do you accept?"

"I do sir" Pettigrew responded, before coming back to his sense.

Harry smiled, his plan had actually worked. Looking at Ginny who was also grinning and shaking her head at the ingenuity of it, Harry walked forwards to the cage and unlocked it.

"Remember Wormtail, regular updates of information and I may call on you occasionally for meetings and further commands. Now come here."

Wormtail walked cautiously up to Harry, looking terrified as always.

"What are you doing?" Ginny asked

"I can't just send this pathetic excuse for a wizard back to Voldemort unprotected." Harry replied

"You want to protect him? After everything he's done to you?"

"It's not him I'm worried about, it's us and the war effort. Tom would spot a traitor a mile off, especially one as magically useless as this. I need to protect his mind and so protect our secrets."

"And how are you going to do that? Even if you teach him occlumency, there's no way that he'd be powerful enough to defend his mind against Voldemort." Ginny pointed out.

"I'm not going to teach him Occlumency, rather I'm going to use my powers to protect his mind."

"But how? That's impossible, to mentally reach out over a distance of what could be hundreds of miles for such a long period of time."

"You're absolutely right Gin, which is why I'm not going to mentally project myself over hundreds of miles, at least not for any sustained period of time."

"OK, you're not making any sense."

"Probably not. You see what you have to understand is; I'm really, really good. And because of this I've figured out a way to work around this little problem. I'm going to put a sort of transmitter in Wormtail's mind and when his, incidentally pathetic, mental defences are being breached, it will send a signal to me and I will then enter his mind and protect it. I'll, and this is the brilliant part, plant false thoughts and memories for Voldemort to see rather than blocking him directly and giving myself away. Voldy'll expect to see thoughts and memories and that's exactly what he'll get, he won't question it. It won't even cross his mind that Wormtail's mind would be in any way protected."

Ginny digested this information for awhile before breaking in to a huge grin.

“No you’re better than really, really good Harry, as Ron would say you’re bloody brilliant! Can you actually do that?”

“Sure,” Harry replied, before quietly adding; “probably.”

Turning once more to Wormtail, Harry focused on his eyes and drew his wand, pointing it at him, he whispered;

“Leglimens!”

Images of Pettigrew’s life started to flash before Harry’s eyes but he ignored them, instead withdrawing slightly until he came across a thin, clear shield; Wormtail’s mental defences. Focusing on this, Harry placed an alert charm on the defences, designed to activate should an outside presence attempt to enter. He then went on to add a signal spell to the alert charm, to tell Harry when it had gone off. Withdrawing from Pettigrew’s mind, Harry stumbled back slightly from the mental and magical strain. Held up by Ginny, Harry recovered slightly and approached Wormtail once more.

“Here goes nothing,” he said, “Leglimens!”

Upon entering Wormtail’s mind, Harry suddenly heard an incessant beeping noise in the back of his mind and he was suddenly aware of an outside presence. Coming out of Wormtail’s mind, he hugged Ginny and jumped up punching the air.

“Yes! He shoots, he scores. That’s spy number three.” He shouted, Smiling at Ginny who also looked to be delighted. Remembering that he still had one last things to do, Harry released Ginny and turned to Wormtail.

“Now go”, he ordered the rat, “Do as I command”

Pettigrew promptly ran out of the trunk and disappeared out of sight. Harry breathed a sigh of relief and, suddenly realising how tired he was, faced Ginny again.

“That’s spies amongst the order, the Slytherins and the death eaters Gin, our war has officially begun.”

“What about the DA?” Ginny enquired, “We still need to turn a bunch of students in to an army capable of fighting a highly trained dark army.”

“Yes,” Harry agreed, “there’s still a lot to do. But not today, I’m exhausted and I’m going to bed.”

“You know you still haven’t told me what Harding said to you last night.” Ginny reminded him.

“I know.” Harry replied, walking away from her to the side of the trunk.

“Hey!” Ginny shouted, running after him and accepting that she wouldn’t get any more information out of him today.

Without another word, Harry and Ginny exited the trunk, Ginny then departing in the direction of the common room and her dormitory. Harry glanced at the clock and, seeing that it read 1:30am, sunk back into his pillow, it had been a long day and Harry Potter was asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

The next three months passed quickly for Harry as he was kept constantly busy with his training and the DA along with his NEWT lessons. The DA had been transformed in this time into a proper fighting force, with Harry making Ginny, Dobby and Neville the generals to his commander in chief. The troops were making remarkable progress. With a good DADA teacher for a change, Harry was really able to focus on the war effort and training his soldiers for combat situations and he had just done that with multi-party duels and battle situations.

Ron and his relationship with Harry had returned to something almost resembling normality, though they still weren't nearly as close as they had been before, as Ron was burdened with the friendship and, to his eyes, unrequited love of Hermione Granger who still maintained that she was right; disillusioned that Harry would use the dark arts, even in the war. Hermione was frosty at best towards Harry, staunchly supporting Dumbledore, with whom Harry hadn't spoken to since their argument at the start of term.

The order, however, were a different matter, Harry had started receiving letters from Remus just after the start of the year and it turned out that Thane was right, the order was made up of mostly good people. People of whom many were against Dumbledore's handling of 'the Harry situation.' Harry's training had progressed well and, though he didn't have much time with his other responsibilities, he had taught himself many new spells and techniques and he was starting to feel that he might even have a chance of surviving for more than five minutes against the massively superior army that he was planning to take on.

His spies too had been good to their words, Dobby continued to bring regular updates about the order and what they were doing (which was not much as far as Harry could see). Wormtail reported to him every week about death eater meetings and further plans which proved highly useful, though Voldemort didn't seem to bother keeping Wormtail in the loop about his biggest plan of all, Harry was still very short on information on the mysterious 'object'; what it was, where it was and how close Voldemort was to getting his hands on it.

Since their meeting on the second day of term, Blaise Zabini had started to come along to DA meetings, bringing along regular updates of rumours in the Slytherin common room along with anything he could find out from his uncle who, it turned out, was a highly ranking death eater, answerable only to Malfoy, Lestrangle, Dolohov and Voldemort himself. It took a while for Blaise to be accepted by his fellow soldiers into the army, old biases being hard to fight past, but his usefulness and undeniable skill and power were hard to ignore and fairly soon he was being treated as one of them, with being promoted by Harry to the rank of sergeant helping him to feel included.

At first Harry was not sure what to do with all of this information, his troops were not yet ready for open conflict with the death eaters and, though Ginny tried to persuade him, his pride would not let him speak to Dumbledore. That was when Remus started to write, making it very clear what he thought of what Dumbledore had done to Harry, Remus was in the order and Harry could use that. After persuading Remus of his plan, Harry started to feed him all of the useful information that he received which Lupin then forwarded on to the order, claiming that he had a 'contact' (which was true) in the werewolf branch of Voldemort's supporters (which was not).

The term had been hard for Harry, with so much work load, he had to do something he never thought he would; give up quidditch. The time spent with his friends too was cut short, Ginny still had quidditch, filling in for Harry as seeker and Ron still had to divide his time between them and Hermione. With all of this going on, Harry was relieved that it was almost Christmas, Remus had invited him to stay at his house for the holidays and it was implied that Thane and a certain metamorphmagus would be coming too.

There was still two weeks left of school though and Thane had a surprise for everyone.

"We're going to have a duelling tournament" he said.

It was Monday morning two weeks before the start of the Christmas holidays and Harding's words were met by a shocked and confused silence which quickly turned into excited chatter. Harry just smile up

at his teacher, he and Thane had gotten fairly close over the past few months, Harry would often go and see him in his office where they would share a butterbeer (and occasionally something stronger) and swap anecdotes about their time at Hogwarts and, in Thane's case, after. Harry had known about the tournament for a few weeks now, in fact it was he that suggested that the students should somehow put together and showcase their talents.

"It is not compulsory but I highly recommend it, the duels will take place in the afternoon every other day, except for weekends starting today, half one in the afternoon in the great hall. If you want to enter, just place your name into the sorting hat which is on a stool outside the hall. The competition is open to fifth years and above and the winner will be duelling in front of the whole school against a fully trained, highly powerful and devilishly handsome auror... me. Well that's all we've got time for so get out of my classroom, read the section of your books on specific defensive spells, that is spells that block against spells protego won't."

With what they recognised as their dismissal, the class filed out with Harry bringing up the rear.

"Oh professor," he said as he left, "I just want to apologise in advance, it'll be very embarrassing to be put on your arse by a student, even if it is the boy who lived."

Thane grinned and shook his head; "Don't be too confident Potter," he retorted, "I've been holding back my best moves for that moment."

Coming out of the classroom, Harry looked at his watch only to realise that it was already one pm and so jogged to the great hall. Reaching the hall, Harry jumped into his seat next to Ginny, shocking the youngest Weasley, who hadn't heard him approach.

"Hey Gin" Harry began, "heard about the tournament yet?"

"Yes, actually I've just put my name into the hat, pretty much everyone in my year have entered, not that they expect to get very far. Dean and Seamus have taken over Fred and George's job, but they stopped taking bets on you within the first fifteen minutes."

"I don't know Gin', I wouldn't like to get on your bad side and the DA have come on a long way, I'm not going to walk it," Harry replied modestly.

After dinner Harry, put his name in the sorting hat just as it was being taken away, before joining the crowds in the hall. It looked like the whole school was there, even those ineligible for the tournament had turned up to watch and all those present were engaged in excited chatter, which died down into silence as Thane Harding took to the stage.

"Welcome to the Hogwarts duelling tournament. Over the next couple of weeks before the Christmas holidays you'll test your mettle as well as the skills you have learnt over the term against your peers until we have one champion who will face me in a duel the day before the end of term. The tournament works in stages, an even number of you have entered so we will have randomly chosen one on one duels until half of the entrants have been eliminated from the competition with the other half progressing to the next round. This will continue until all but one are out the competition and we have our champion. Ninety six of you have entered the tournament which means that there will be five rounds until there are three competitors remaining, those three people will duel each of their two rivals separately the winner will be the person who wins the most. If all three of the finalists win a dual each then... I guess I'll just have to think up a plan B, but for now let the contest begin."

The sorting hat was then brought onto the stage by a miserable looking Filch, still sulking from the loss of Umbridge and silence descended once more upon the crowd as they waited with baited breath for the sorting hat to speak. After a tense pause the sorting hat finally opened split in the middle like a mouth and spoke;

"The first duel will be between Draco Malfoy..." A cheer erupted from the Slytherin crowd as Malfoy stepped onto the stage, "...and Ginerva Weasley",

Harry felt a stab of dread about Ginny having to face Malfoy but nonetheless led the cheers for her, giving her an encouraging smile as she glanced back at him before joining Malfoy on the stage.

“OK here are the rules”, Thane began, taking his position between them as the duels referee, “No unforgivable curses and no curses that will cause death or serious or lasting mental or physical damage. Is that understood.”

“Yes sir”, Ginny replied.

Malfoy just gave a small jerk of his head to show that he had heard. Harding looked worried for a second but , with a reassuring smile in Ginny’s direction before backing off to the back of the platform before speaking again.

“OK, are you both ready?” Both parties nodded. “When I give the word, turn away from each other and start to walk away, on the count of three you will turn and the dual will begin. And take note that I said three if anyone should decide to begin before I reach three I will step in and that person will be disqualified from the competition. Now bow to each other.” They obliged, both keeping their eyes on their opponent and just barely inclining their head. “Good enough, now start your paces. One...Two...Three.”

As soon as the word escaped Thane’s lips, both Ginny and Malfoy whipped around. It was Malfoy who got his spell away first, however, screaming;

“Condolesco!”

Ginny was forced to dive out of the way, recognising the sister curse of the cruciatus curse, a curse designed to inflict severe pain wherever it strikes. Rolling out of her dive, Ginny came up and sent a stunner at Malfoy who deflected it with protego before returning fire with a reducto curse. Ginny rose a shield but was blasted back by the force of the spell which was only weakened by the simple shield charm.

Jumping back up to her feet Ginny immediately found herself bound to the floor with ropes conjured by Malfoys wand. Malfoy smirked and casually raised his wand to finish Ginny off but was caught off guard as she pointed her wand at the floor and shouted;

“Lubricus Humi!”

The floor was filled with a slippery substance and Malfoy was caught off balance and slipped onto his backside. Ginny made use of the time she had bought herself to cut herself free of the ropes as Malfoy stumbled back to his feet, vanishing the slick substance with a wave of his wand.

Going on the attack, Ginny aimed her wand at the ground once more and shouted

“Motus Humo!”

The floor disintegrated at Malfoy’s feet but he leapt over the broken ground just as Kingsley had done months earlier, landing smoothly, he shouted

“Extrudo!”

Ginny just managed to raise her shield in time with a shout of

“Aegis ultimus!”

The shield took most of the spells power but forced Ginny back a few feet, making her stumble a little and her shield disappear. Malfoy took advantage of this and with careful aim, screamed;

“Expelliarmus!”

Ginny was caught off guard and her wand went flying from her hand as the red jet of light struck her in the chest.

“Excellent...” Thane began, stepping forward to declare the duel. Before he could finish his sentence, however, Malfoy had directed his wand at Ginny again and, with a Malevolent smirk, calmly spoke the

word "Sectumsemptra!" The evil beam sped towards a shocked looking Ginny. Thane scrambled for his wand but Harry had reacted first, stepping forward, he waved his hand, his eyes glowing a furious emerald green and a silver shield materialised in front of the youngest Weasley.

The shield took the blow of the spell, rebounding the dark curse back upon a horrified looking Malfoy who was forced to dive out of the way. His eyes still emanating green light his face a picture of fury, Harry stepped onto the stage and faced Malfoy.

"She is incapacitated Malfoy, the duel's is over. Stow away your wand,"

for the first time, Harry drew his wand from his pocket and aimed squarely between Malfoy's eyes,

"NOW."

Malfoy seemed to recognise the seriousness of the implied threat from the cold calculated way Harry spoke and, looking frankly terrified and with a vague attempt at bravado, smirked at Harry before stowing his wand and walking off the stage.

Harry turned around to find Ginny running towards him, flinging her arms around him as she reached where he stood. Finally separating after a number of seconds, Harry looked at her, she was still pale but was beaming at him.

"I would have blocked it you know." she said to him playfully.

"Well I am sorry," Harry replied sarcastically, "next time a junior death eater shoots a dark curse at you remind me to leave you alone."

"You let him off quite easily, I would have expected a body by now, not a person and especially not a conscious one."

"I'm not a complete idiot Gin"" Harry replied, "I'll kill him when the whole school isn't watching us"

“Ahem.” Thane cleared his throat, bringing the fact that he and the whole school were still there back to Harry and Ginny’s attention.

“As I was saying, the winner of the first duel of the competition is Draco Malfoy, congratulations to both combatants for a great duel. And I think ten points to Slytherin for the victory would be appropriate.”

The Slytherins broke in to applause, cheering until Thane held his hands up for silence. “And I think fifty points from Slytherin would be just as appropriate for the use of a dark spell on an unarmed opponent.”

The smirks were instantly wiped off the Slytherins’ faces as the rest of the hall cheered.

The sorting hat was then brought up to the stage once more and one by one people were either eliminated from the tournament or progressed to the next round. The first round saw Ron, Hermione, Neville, Blaise and Cho join Malfoy in the next round along with countless other, many of whom were from the DA. Harry was just starting to get bored as Colin Creevey lost out in a duel against Ernie Macmillan and the sorting hat was brought on to the stage to announce the participants in the fortieth and ninth to last duel. The sorting hat sat silent for a moment before announcing;

“The next combatants in the tournament will be Harry Potter and Theodore Nott.”

Harry smiled and jumped onto the stage, watching from above as a stringy Slytherin, looking decidedly frightened, made his way to join Harry on the platform.

“OK you know the rules,” Thane said as they took their positions opposite each other, “you may start your paces and begin on the count of three”

Harry turned and started to walk, his wand held in front of him like a sword, listening to Thane’s voice from behind him.

“One...Two...Three!”

Harry turned on the word, raising an ‘aegis ultimus’ shield as he did so. Taking his respite to analyse his opponent as Nott’s spell rebounded harmlessly off his shield, Harry saw in the Slytherin’s duelling stance that he wasn’t the most competent of fighters and decided to end it quickly.

“Incarcerous!” He shouted, watching satisfied as ropes flew at Nott, ready to wrap themselves around him when they hit. Nott was quicker than Harry had thought, however, and abruptly brought up his wand and started shouting; “Diffindo!” at the ropes, cutting them to shreds and rendering them useless.

Harry had made good use of the distraction and kept Nott on the back foot by keeping on the offensive, wordlessly shooting the ‘motus humo’ jinx at his feet and tripping him up. Nott somehow managed to raise a shield in time as he fell to the floor, blocking the red beam of the stunning curse and scrambled back up to his feet.

Harry, for his part was getting annoyed at Nott’s persistence and decided to make sure he finished him off. Casting a bubble head charm around himself, he muttered the word “Intransitus!” A deafening, screeching white noise tore through the hall, making everyone but Harry, safe in his bubble-head charm, contort their faces in pain and cover their ears.

Nott immediately dropped his wand, trying desperately to stop the tortuous sound from penetrating his ear drums. Harry took full advantage of his distracted opponent and calmly said;

“Lubricus Humo!” The slippery liquid which materialised on the floor made short work of Nott’s balance, making him fall to his knees. Harry tried to disarm him once more with a shout of “Expelliarmus!” but the Slytherin somehow managed to roll to the side.

Harry then decided on a big finish, aiming his wand at the floor he said, “Petrolius Aduro!” Petrol streamed out of his wand, circling Nott, leaving only a gap at the front, he then muttered,

“Incendio!”

Nott, who had just managed to stumble to his feet, just had time to look shocked before he was surrounded by flames, shaped and made more powerful by the flammable petroleum. He then just managed to grab his wand from the floor and point them at the flames when he was forced to duck as a dozen arrows flew at his face courtesy of Harry’s arrow-wand charm. Happy that there was no where for him to run, the flames cutting off all retreat, and the arrow wand charm delaying Nott from putting out the flames, Harry then paused for a second, finding his inner magical core and channelling his power to his finger tips. Then with a cry of;

“Stupefy!” he unleashed his the magical power bubbling at his fingertips in the form of a huge bolt of red light which flew straight at the awe-struck Nott.

Nott quickly gave up his efforts to put out the fire and shouted “Aegis Ultimus!” The shield was raised in time but the satisfied smile that spread on Nott’s face was soon wiped clean off as the curse struck the shield. Time seemed to slow down and though for a second the shield seemed to hold, the beam of light then smashed through it hitting Nott squarely in the chest. He was unconscious before he had even hit the floor as he was flung through the flames and right to the other end of the platform.

Smiling at his success, Harry put out the flames with a wave of his hand and, walking forward to where Nott lay, did the same to Nott’s smouldering clothes, before waking him up with a silent ‘enervate’ and pulled him to his feet. Cheers rung out from the crowd and Harding stepped forward beaming.

“Excellent duel. The winner is Mr. Harry Potter and that means another ten points to Gryffindor.”

Harry left the hall with Ginny after his duel, too tired to be bothered to stay and watch the others. It was now five o’clock and they decided to get some early dinner, walking down to the kitchens (the great hall being occupied with the tournament), Harry paused at the entrance.

“You go ahead Gin” he said, “I just have to take care of something really quickly first.”

Tapping his wand on himself, Harry felt a sensation like an egg being cracked over his head as he was disillusioned. Going into a jog, he made his way back to the entrance hall and hunted down his target. Seeing the blonde prince of Slytherin, Harry walked quietly over to him and cast a silent ‘silencio’ charm. Next he tapped his wand on Malfoy’s head, performing the same charm on him that he had on himself only minutes before. Malfoy looked around confused and tried to say something, only to find himself unable to speak. Panic settled in the eyes of Draco Malfoy and he went to run and try and alert someone to his predicament but he soon found himself in a fully body bind, which had been silently performed by an invisible source.

Levitating the, now completely panic-stricken Malfoy ahead of him, Harry walked calmly and slowly out of the hall, making sure not to bump into anyone, and into a small nearby classroom. Locking the door and satisfied that they were alone, Harry then took the disillusionment charm off of both of them and sat down in front of Malfoy who he had leant against the teachers desk at the front of the classroom. Harry though the disused and cobweb filled classroom, with it’s slightly dank smell made the perfect setting for this little conversation.

“I brought you here Malfoy as a friend,” Harry began in a calm, friendly voice which carried with it an oddly threatening inference. “You see as your friend I would hate to see you dead or horrifically maimed and disfigured or even humiliated in front of your house mates but that is what is going to happen if you try and hurt one of my friends again. So consider this a friendly warning Malfoy, because if you so much as look at Ginny Weasley the wrong way again, I will kill you.”

This last part was spoken so casually, it terrified Malfoy, it seemed to him that Harry would have shouted an empty threat at him, this seemed much more serious. It seemed like a promise. With a smile at his captive and a click of his fingers to cancel the body-bind and silencio charm, Harry strolled out of the classroom and made his way back to the kitchens.

“What was that all about?” Ginny asked as he walked into the kitchens and was mobbed by an army of enthusiastic house elves.

“Nothing. Don’t worry about it.” Came Harry’s reply, Ginny didn’t seem satisfied with his answer but, correctly interpreting the expression on his face, let it go.

The tournament carried on over the next couple of weeks without any real problem for Harry and pretty soon it was the semi-finals. Hermione had knocked Ron out in the last round in a, Harry had to admit, brilliant duel. Hermione had just managed to tip the balance in her favour with a well worked out plan which involved distracting Ron with a bang from her wand, tying him to the ground and disarming him as he tried desperately to free himself. Only Harry, Hermione, Blaise, Neville, Cho and, much to Harry’s dismay, Malfoy, remained in the tournament and the first duel to be announced was Blaise against Cho.

As far as Harry could see, Cho had gotten this far into the competition on pure luck. She had certainly improved vastly from her time with the DA but she didn’t seem to be nearly as talented as her fellow semi-finalists and had an easy run in into the semis. It came as no surprise, therefore, that Blaise had annihilated her, dancing circles around her in a completely one-way, but nevertheless impressive, duel. Blaise was the first person to progress to the final and Harry knew that he would be a worthy competitor, under his tuition in the DA, Blaise had become a highly skilled and powerful ally and Harry never regretted his decision to recruit him, even if it was still costing him 50 galleons a week. Harry was brought back to reality as the sorting hat was brought on to the stage to announce the second semi-final.

“The next duel”, the sorting hat began, “will be fought between Harry Potter and...Hermione Granger.”

Harry didn’t know whether to feel pleased about this draw or not, he had really wanted an excuse to fight Malfoy, but he had a nasty feeling that Malfoy would beat Neville and that they would be meeting in the final anyway. This also gave him a chance to show up Hermione who still wouldn’t talk to him and was still creating a rift in

the friendship of him and Ron. Confidently, knowing that he was a better dueller than Hermione any day of the week, Harry jumped up on to the duelling platform and faced his old friend. After Thane had done his spiel about the rules, they bowed and then turned away from each other to begin their paces.

“One...Two...Three.”

Harry whipped around quickly this time, determined to go on the offensive straight away.

“Extrudo!”, he shouted, making Hermione cancel the curse she was about to perform and raise a shield. Hermione’s shield was strong and took most of the power from the shield, but she had to struggle to maintain her balance as the power pushed her back a few feet. Harry, meanwhile, had started running towards her, turning his shoulder slightly to avoid the stunner just shot from Hermione’s wand. He then pointed his wand above her head and silently conjured a large boulder, which fell towards her.

Hermione looked alarmed but recovered to summon a powerful shield above her head which blocked the boulder, making it fall to one side. At that moment however, Harry had shouted;

“Motus Humo!”,

Hermione, too distracted from the attack from above didn’t have time to block the attack from beneath and fell as the earth crumbled under her feet. She rolled to one side to avoid the ‘expelliarmus’ Harry had shot at her, but while all this had been happening, Harry continued to run forward. Hermione jumped to her feet, her wand at the ready, but was shocked to find Harry standing right in front of her, his wand inches from her chest.

Harry smiled at her and whispered;

“Stupefy!”

Hermione keeled over where she stood. Harry 'enervated' her and sportingly offered her his hand, which she begrudgingly took, pulling herself up and walking off the stage.

"Very well done Harry," Thane said, "that will be another ten points to Gryffindor. So that leaves Draco Malfoy and Neville Longbottom in the final Semi-final before we go into the finals tomorrow."

As Harry predicted, it was Malfoy who emerged victorious from the duel. Neville put up a good fight but Malfoy's magical power and duelling skill proved superior and his shameless use of border-line dark spell gave him an advantage over Neville who remained completely above board in his choice of spells.

"Excellent," Thane shouted walking to the front of the stage and speaking to the crowd,  
"we have our three finalists, they are; Harry Potter, Blaise Zabini and Draco Malfoy",

Cheers greeted all three of these names from various sections of the crowd.

"The final will take place tomorrow when the whole school including staff will be there to watch. All three of the of the finalists will fight the other two with the person with the most wins will be crowned champion. If all three fighters win one each then they will all fight again until we have a winner. The champion will then face me in a one on one duel with Professor Dumbledore acting as referee. That is the end of the duels for today, I'll see all of you tomorrow."

The crowd exited the hall chattering excitedly about the upcoming duels. Harry went to bed early that night to get plenty of rest before the big duels. It was not Blaise and Malfoy that he was concerned about, he was fairly confident that he could take them. Thane, however, was another matter, he was one of the most senior aurors in the ministry, trained by both Mad eye and his own father, so it was safe to assume that he could look after himself in a duel. And though he knew that nobody expected him to beat professor Harding, he didn't want to end up humiliated.

Classes the next day seemed to go on forever and Harry was unable to concentrate, feeling uncharacteristically nervous. Ginny and Ron tried to reassure him and stop him from losing too many house points (they had potions), but it was no use and Harry was vastly relieved when dinner time came around, even though he knew that he wouldn't be able to eat a thing.

"Welcome to the final of the Hogwarts duelling tournament," Thane was addressing the whole school, which was packed into the hall along with the professors and even the ghosts, "you all know the rules and what your fighting for so without further ado. Minerva, if I could have the sorting hat please."

McGonagall passed the ragged old hat to the DADA professor, who then placed it onto it's stool and waited, along with every one else in the room, for the hat to announce the first duel.

"The first duel", the hat finally spoke up, "will be between Blaise Zabini and...Harry Potter."

Harry and Blaise bowed to each other, mutually respectful of the others skills, and turned around, starting to pace.

"One...Two...Three."

This time Harry allowed Blaise to get the first spell in, shouting "Arma Agentum!" to conjure a shiny silver shield which blocked Blaise's arrow-wand charm without a problem. Blaise's biggest weakness, Harry knew, was that he would sometimes over-commit to an offensive, leaving himself vulnerable to attack. For this reason, Harry decided to fight tactically and stay on the defensive for the time being, striking when the opportunity arose.

Blaise followed up his arrow-wand charm with a reducto aimed at Harry's feet. The spell hit the ground and Harry was forced to jump over the hole in the ground, shooting cutting spells as he fell to counter the ropes Blaise had shot at him with a cry of "Incarcerous!" Harry had barely landed when Blaise launched his next offensive, thrusting his wand forward and shouting;

“Deflagratio!”

Blaise looked momentarily shocked then delighted as the flames engulfed Harry in a jet of fire, knowing that nobody could come out of that still on their feet. As the flames cleared, however, the silhouetted figure of Harry Potter stood tall in the smoke which still swirled around him. Blaise recovered almost immediately, with a shout of

“Condolesco!”

Harry pointed his wand behind him, muttering,

“Pulsum!” The propulsion spell sped him out of the way of the dark curse, Harry then decided that it was time to act and shot a powerful stunner at his opponent.

Blaise spun around to face Harry, who had been propelled at a 90 degree angle to him, just raising an ‘Aegis ultimus’ shield in time. However he was knocked slightly off balance by the angle at which the spell struck the shield and stumbled. Harry took full advantage of this, silently performing the ‘incarcerous’ charm and watching as ropes flew at his opponent and wrapped themselves around his ankles. Harry then magically pulled on the rope, tripping Blaise up, Blaise had raised his shield for an attack he felt was sure to come and this blocked the stunner Harry had sent flying at him. Blaise then managed to cut away the ropes but, on stumbling to his feet, saw that Harry was nowhere to be seen, he raised his shield once more confused and apprehensive. At that moment, Harry seemed to materialise less than a foot away from Blaise and casually reached through his shield, designed only to block spells, and plucked his wand from his grip.

Harry smiled as the crowd broke out in applause and he glimpsed and Blaise sportingly came up to him and shook his hand.

“OK,” he said, “I give up, how did you do it?”

“The deflagratio curse? Wordless flame freezing charm.” Harry replied

“And the whole invisibility thing?”

“That was just a disillusionment charm, all it took was a distraction and me creeping up on you on my tip toes.”

“Well I’ll give you that one Potter, good luck against Malfoy.”

“You too”, Harry replied, as they walked off the stage together. The hat opened it’s mouth to speak a few minutes later.

“The next duel will be between,” it paused, seemingly to create tension, “Draco Malfoy and ... Blaise Zabini.”

Both Slytherins climbed up onto the stage and took their positions opposite each other, glaring at each other with a hatred Malfoy usually reserved just for Harry. The duel which followed was a brilliant one, it seemed that they were evenly matched and both were unafraid to use border line dark arts. Eventually, Malfoy managed to trip Blaise up, following up with a shout of “Sectumsempra!” Blood spurted from wounds appearing on Blaise’s chest and face and Thane was forced to call the duel, instructing a third year Slytherin to escort him to the hospital wing.

“Well, with both Mr Malfoy and Mr Potter winning their first duels, this will be the true final, the winner of this duel will be the champion of the whole tournament. If Harry and Draco could please come up here.”

Harry and Malfoy faced each other on the stage and jerked their heads at each other, their eyes never leaving the other.

“Good luck Draco” Harry said, with a smirk Malfoy himself would have been proud of. They then turned and started to pace away from each other waiting for Thane’s order to turn and begin the duel.

“One...Two...Three!”

Harry whipped around, slashing his wand and yelling,

“Sectumsemptra! Stupefy! Expelliarmus!”, determined to get revenge on the young Malfoy.

Draco jumped out of the way of the first two, raising a shield as he rolled to block the third. Malfoy then came up out of his dive and summoned a suit of armour which came whizzing onto the platform and was animated by Malfoy, with a shout of,

“Animus!”.

The suit of armour sprung to life and launched itself at Harry. He pointed his wand at it and vanished it, saying; “Evanescio!” followed quickly by,

“Aegis Ultimus!” to block the coma curse which Malfoy had fired, hoping to catch Harry off guard.

Harry then decided to take the initiative and whirled his wand silently conjuring a stone statue of a man who, with another flick of Harry’s wand, awkwardly started to walk at Malfoy it’s arms outstretched like a zombie. Malfoy first sneered at this stumbling creature and casually raised his wand, slashing it in the air and saying;

“Reducto!” The spell hit, blowing a wide hole in it’s torso.

The statue faltered but, with some effort and encouragement from Harry, then started running at Malfoy who panicked, running backwards and sending spell after spell after his chaser. These spells only served to slow down the statue and Harry took advantage of Malfoy’s distraction by flicking his wrist, sending a silent and wandless ‘Motus Humo’ flying from his hand, hitting the floor immediately behind the still retreating Malfoy.

Right to plan, Malfoy tripped, falling backwards over the broken ground. However, as he was falling, he finally managed to get rid of the statue with a well placed reducto to the legs, sending the conjured being crumbling uselessly to the ground. He then managed to avoid Harry’s stunner with a neat backwards roll which brought him back up to his feet.

“Extrudo! Supplantus!” Harry yelled,.

Malfoy’s shield took the power of the extrudo curse but broke up from the effort, allowing the tripping to jinx to strike him in the leg.

Malfoy fell spectacularly but recovered quickly from the shock, rolling to one side and scrambling to his feet. As soon as his feet found the floor, however, there was a cry of;

“Suffuco!” and Malfoy was brought up into the air, floating eerily and clutching at his throat, suffering from the effects of the dark strangulation spell. Too busy desperately trying to breathe to remember that he was in a duel, Malfoy dropped his wand and Thane made to move forward but Harry did not release the spell and Malfoy started to turn blue.

“Release him Harry,” Thane shouted, “he is disarmed, incapacitated.”

Harry, however paid no heed, his only reply being to thrust his left, wandless hand out, pushing an unsuspecting Harding back. Finally, Malfoy fell unconscious, his head drooping forward and Harry immediately released him from the spell, letting him drop to the floor.

“Harry I-” Thane began but Harry interrupted him.

“Just a friendly reminder professor, that no junior death-eater can try and hurt my friends.”

Thane seemed to understand and nodded almost imperceptibly before saying, “Five points from Gryffindor.” The other teachers around the hall seemed shocked that such a lowly sum was deducted but didn’t say anything and Thane carried on as if nothing had happened.

“We have out champion ladies and gentlemen. I present to you Mr. Harry Potter.” Thane shouted as the crowd broke into cheers. “Congratulations Harry, I think fifty points to Gryffindor will be appropriate. We’ll now take a fifteen minute break before out champion here will be taking on yours truly in a duel.”

That fifteen minutes passed in a flash for Harry, who spent it just outside the hall with some DA members who were trying to get him psyched up for it. Soon the call came from Dumbledore for everybody to re-enter the hall as the duel was about to begin.

Climbing onto the stage to the sounds of cheers from his supporters (and some boos from Slytherins), Harry avoided looking at his headmaster and former mentor, who was watching him interestedly. Instead he focused his eyes on his opponent who smiled and winked good-naturedly at him before turning to Dumbledore and listened patiently to the rules of engagement.

“...all spells are legal except unforgivables and spells which cause serious or lasting physical or mental damage. When I give the order, you will turn and walk away from each other and the duel will begin on my count of three.” Dumbledore spoke clearly, looking specifically at Harry as if not trusting him to comply, “you may begin your paces.”

Harry felt a stab of nerves but forced himself to concentrate, he knew full well what he was going to do, having planned it out months in advance. Dumbledore’s voice then permeated his musings, bringing Harry back to the present.

“One...Two...Three!”

Harry immediately threw himself to one side, rolling out of the dive and coming up with his wand pointing at Thane, the red bolt of the stunning curse having flown past him.

“Motus Humo!” he cried, aiming at Thane’s feet

“Arma Argentum!” was the reply, and the silver shield conjured from Thane’s wand was flung forward to block the ground disintegrating curse. Thane then cried

“Praestigus!”

Harry didn’t recognise the spell so, to be on the safe side, rose a shining silver shield.

Instead of a bolt of light, however, three lions appeared out of thin air and launched themselves at Harry. Harry's eyes widened in shock and he stumbled backwards, shouting;

"Evanesco!"

The spell passed right through the lions and Harry realised that he was confronted with illusions rather than actual gigantic carnivores. Too late however, he raised his wand and uttered the words;

"Finite Incantatem!" The lions disappeared but were followed by the tripping curse, which struck him in the leg, making him fall to the floor.

Thane propelled himself forward so that he was only a foot away from Harry, but Harry, still on the floor, raised his wand and cried;

"Flabrus!" A powerful wind blew from Harry's wand, lifting Thane into the air and flung him across the room. Harry followed this by a stunner which he shot at Thane who was still flying through the air. Thane spun in the air, raising his wand and crying;

"Aegis ultimus!"

The shield took the blow and Thane managed to land safely on the ground.

"Serpensortia!" Harry said, pointing his wand at the floor just in front of Thane's feet, a large boa constrictor, over eight feet long sprung from Harry's wand. He then muttered;

"Duplicus!" and the snake split into two and started to advance on Harding.

"Wrap around his ankles and tie him to the floor."

Harry hissed at the snakes in Parseltongue. The snakes gladly complied, wrapping their thick bodies around the shocked looking Harding. Harry tried to make the most of this and wordlessly pointed his wand at Thane, the red bolt of the 'expelliarmus' spell flew at high

speed towards him, Thane, however, seemed to sense it coming and raised his wand.

Though stumbling backwards, still trapped by the snakes, Thane managed to block the spell and then turned his wand to the snakes which he vanished with a swish of his wand. Harry then fired a stunner at Thane but he, now free of the snakes, dived to one side and from his position on the floor shouted;

“Stupefy! Extrudo! Condolesco!”

Three spells flew at Harry who hadn't been expecting a counter attack so quickly and realised that he wouldn't be able to raise a powerful enough shield. Improvising quickly, Harry pointed his wand to the floor and cried;

“Pulsum!” Harry was propelled in to the air, flying over the top of the three spells and looked down onto a very shocked Thane Harding. Aiming his wand down below, he shouted;

“Stupefy!”

Thane raised his shield in time and the spell rebounded harmlessly away as Harry landed.

“Expelliarmus!” he cried. Thane looked puzzled at the use of such a basic spell but raised simple shield anyway;

“Protego!” He soon got a another shock, however, as instead of the red beam of the ‘expelliarmus’ spell, the lightning blue bolt of the ‘extrudo’ curse came flying out of Harry's wand, fresh from months of practice of saying the incantation of one spell and firing another.

The extrudo curse broke through Thane's basic shield with ease and struck the professor in the chest, pushing him along the floor until he hit the wall at the end of the duelling platform. Thane immediately jumped back to his feet before diving right back down again to avoid a stunner which flew over his head. Thane then jumped back to his feet.

Harry took full advantage of having Thane on the back foot, shouting "Sagitto!" Arrows came flying out of his wand directly towards the still recovering Thane, Thane reacted quickly, flourishing his wand and transforming the arrows into a harmless block of wood. The block of wood continued to fly at him, but Harding then poked his wand at the block and cried;

"Portus!" The wood glowed a bright blue before finally reaching Harding who caught it and faded into thin air.

Harry realised what was happening and looked around waiting for his teacher to reappear. Recognising where the most likely place for him to want to be, Harry abruptly spun on his heel, coming face to face with his opponent. "Extrudo!" Harry cried as Thane simultaneously yelled, "Stupefy!"

The bolts of blue and red mixed, dancing around each other until, with a huge BANG! They exploded, lifting both Harry and Thane into the air and blowing them apart.

They landed on the opposite sides of the stage, both the worse for wear, battered and bruised from the explosion. Harry struggled to his feet, determined to keep fighting and knowing that this was a good chance to gain the upper hand. Meanwhile, Thane was having a few more problems, the battering he received from being hit by Harry's extrudo earlier on along with the one from the explosion making it difficult for him to stand, especially on what he suspected was a broken leg.

Harry had struggled to his feet and pointed his wand at the injured Harding; saying;

"Stupefy!" The stunner flew at it's target and Thane looked up sensing it's danger. Harry was sure that he was done for but at the last plausible second, he raised his wand and slashed it downwards and, with as much power and conviction as he could muster, cried;

"Scissum Intermundia!"

The air itself in front of Harding seemed to rip, leaving only a line of blackness where his wand had slashed. The beam of the stunning curse entered the rip and, with a pop, both beam and rip had disappeared.

Harry just had time to wonder what the hell had happened before behind him there opened the same rip and the bolt of red flew out striking Harry in the back. Harry crumpled on the spot and Thane, realising that he had won the duel, smiled before collapsing on the floor out of exhaustion.

"Absolutely incredible," Dumbledore muttered under his breath, looking down at the two men at his feet. With a few waves of his wand, Dumbledore revived both of the combatants, who gingerly got to their feet and started walking towards each other.

"The winner of the duel," Dumbledore announced, "is Professor Harding." cheers greeted these words just as Harry and Thane reached each other in the middle of the platform.

"Now that was some duel." Thane said, shaking Harry's hand.

"I'll say," Harry replied, "of course you got lucky with that last move, you have to show me how to do that by the way."

"Over Christmas," Thane replied, "while you're explaining about that say one spell fire another thing. Oh and why you didn't think to mention that you're a parselmouth."

Harry grinned and they both jumped down off the stage, Harry to be met by a gaggle of Defence Association soldiers, led by Ginny who reached him first and flung her arms around him.

"Very impressive", she told him, withdrawing from his arms. "As soon as we get back from the holidays you are teaching me all that."

The next day everyone was gathering in the Hogsmeade station, waiting to be taken home for Christmas. Harry boarded the train with Ron and Ginny, searching for a free compartment they eventually found one that contained only Neville and Luna and Ginny entered. Harry was about to follow when he saw Ron hesitate, following his

friend gaze, he saw Hermione sat in a compartment on her own a few doors down from where they were.

“Go to her mate”, Harry told him, “we’re not exactly on the best terms at the moment but I know how you feel about her.”

Ron nodded appreciatively, “Thanks mate”, he replied, before walking off to join Hermione.

The train journey home was spent playing chess, gobstones, exploding snap and generally laughing and joking with each other and, in what seemed like no time, they arrived at Kings cross station, London. Harry and Ginny bade their farewells to Neville and Luna and soon found themselves alone.

“I’ll write to you over the holidays Harry,” Ginny said to him, “and you better invite me over. I can’t be alone with Mum, Dad and Ron all summer, I’ll go mad.”

“You can count on it,” Harry replied, hugging her as he saw Thane and Remus standing by the gateway from platform nine and three quarters. As they parted, Harry waved her off and turned to join his room-mates for the next two weeks.

Harry was just setting off in their direction when he came across Malfoy with a couple of his cronies.

“Enjoy your Christmas Potter,” he sneered, “I’m sure you’ll find it very hectic, but death can do that to people.”

“As veiled and subtle as that threat was Malfoy, if you have something to say how about you come out and say it.” Came Harry’s reply.

“Just a friendly warning Potter, wouldn’t want you wandering of on your own again now would we? Maybe next time their won’t be anyone around to save you.”

With that Malfoy stalked off smiling, obviously feeling pleased with himself and leaving Harry deep in thought. ‘Did Malfoy mean what I think he means? How the hell did he know about me running from the order?’ Harry snapped himself out of it as he saw Remus and Thane

looking at their watches pointedly. He went over to join them and together they walked through the gateway.

“Aren’t we one short?” Harry asked Remus.

“Tonks’ll be joining us a couple of days before Christmas, she wants to spend a some time with her parents first. It’s good to see you again Harry.” Remus replied.

“You too Remus, and if it’s OK with you I was thinking about inviting a friend over some of the holidays.”

“A red haired, female sort of friend?” Thane asked smiling knowingly.

“Maybe.” Came Harry’s reply. And with that the three of them walked out onto the street, Remus putting his wand arm out to summon the Knight bus.

Harry, Remus and Thane arrived at their destination fifteen minutes after starting their mad journey from Kings cross station and disembarked from the bus looking somewhat greener than they were before. Remus' place was on the outskirts of London, a small terraced house on an ordinary street, not exactly where muggles would expect a wizard to live. Entering the house, Harry saw with a smile that it was, as he expected quite a bit larger on the inside than it appeared from the outside. It was still quite small, but very homely, the living room was filled with over-stuffed chairs, crowded around a table situated in front of a large ornate fireplace.

Thane settled himself into one of the chairs and, with a wave of his wand, lit the fire to warm the room against the harsh Christmas weather. Harry lowered his trunk on to the floor from where it was suspended in mid-air and looked around.

"Nice place Remus," he said

"Thanks, I know it's hardly Grimmauld place but, you probably want to get as far away from that place as possible. If you follow me Harry, I'll show you up to your room"

Remus climbed the stairs at the side of the living room and up into the landing, Harry counted four rooms off of it and Remus led him into the one to the right of the stairs. His room was a good size, a large king-sized bed in the middle of the room, dominating what was otherwise a pretty plain and undecorated room.

"I added this room especially for this Christmas so I know it's hardly homely. I thought that seeing as it was you who would be spending time in here, I would let you decorate it yourself."

Remus told him, picking up on Harry's puzzlement of having walked into a room containing little more than a bed and a wardrobe.

"Wow, thanks Remus but, I'll only be spending a couple of weeks in here, I won't have to live with it." Harry replied.

"Well you could if you wanted."

Harry went over that sentence a few times in his mind but finally decided that he had absolutely no idea what Remus was going on about.

“Nope, that sentence definitely doesn’t make sense.”

Remus smiled,

“I know we haven’t had the chance to talk about this Harry but, just because Dumbledore decided to give you to the Dursleys doesn’t mean that they are your guardians, at least not in the eyes of the ministry. Your parents appointed Sirius as your godfather and to wizards that relationship is sacred. Now Sirius has passed away, your guardianship passes to me.”

Harry took a moment to take all this in as the meaning of Remus’ words hit him and pure and unbridled happiness and hope washed over him.

“You mean I wouldn’t have to go back to the Dursleys?”

Harry asked him, his breath catching in his throat as Remus seemed to take an age to deliver the answer he was waiting for.

“No. In fact, as your guardian, if I insisted on it nobody could make you go back to the Dursley’s ever again, not even Dumbledore. Of course if you don’t want to I’ll understand but I know Sirius offered you a loving home at the end of your third year of Hogwarts and the least I could do is fulfil that promise.”

Harry collapsed on his bed, tired after the emotional and hectic day. Lying on his back, he waved his wand at the walls, turning them crimson and with another wave at the bed coverings, turned them gold. ‘Gryffindor colours. What else could home possibly look like?’ Harry thought to himself. With a final poke of his wand at his trunks, Harry summoned the photo album which had once Hagrid bought him for his birthday. Selecting a few of his favourite pictures, he enlarged them and stuck them to the walls with a permanent sticking charm.

Looking around his room at the smiling faces of his parents and Sirius as well as a couple of his friends and Ginny, Harry smiled and for the first time in months, closed his eyes, feeling at peace. Drifting in to an easy and dreamless sleep, Harry was woke a few hours later at, his watch informed him, ten pm. Deciding that there was no way he would be getting back to sleep anytime soon, he got up and made his way downstairs and into the sitting room.

Walking into the room, he found Remus and Thane talking, each clutching a glass of fire whiskey.

"Hey, Harry", Thane greeted him, "sit down, would you like a drink?"

"Thanks", Harry replied, as Thane conjured him a glass and poured into it some of the dark brown liquid.

They spent the next two hours talking and laughing with each other, just as Harry and Thane had done back at Hogwarts. Harry was starting to get tipsy when the conversation lulled and Harry decided to steer it to the spell Thane had used during their big duel.

"So Thane, what exactly was that spell you used to knock me out in our duel."

Thane smiled; "I was wondering how long it would take you to get round to that."

"Oh yeah the duel, I heard about that," Remus interrupted, "I Very impressive Harry, James would have been proud, Lily on the other hand. She wasn't too happy about anyone putting you in any sort of danger, I still remember the time James tried to put you on his broom when you were a baby. James didn't get rid of those boils for weeks."

Harry smiled, Remus had started drinking a while before him and Thane and had apparently reached the nostalgic stage of drunkenness.

"You were saying?" Harry asked his professor.

"It's called the apparation shield, though the name is technically incorrect as it isn't a shield. Has anyone ever told you that nothing can block the killing curse?"

"Yes actually, I think it was Dumbledore but-"

"You have since seen the contrary proved." Thane finished his sentence for him.

"Right, when Dumbledore and Voldemort were duelling lat year, Avada kedavra was blocked by Dumbledore's silver shield." Harry returned.

"But what you were told is true, nothing can block Avada kedavra, eventually in till run out of energy and dissipitate on it's own but while it is being fired at someone nothing wizarding kind knows off will block it. Are you familiar with the concept of electricity?"

Thane asked

"Wells yes, I was raised by muggles,"

"So you'll know that some substances conduct electricity better than others, silver being the most conductive. Well for the benefit of this explanation think of magic as like electricity, it's physical make up is virtually identical anyway. You may have noticed that conjured silver shields always have a white circle in the middle and is completely white at the back, this is aluminium oxide and it is a very good insulator. When a spell hits the shield, it is conducted around the circle, because of the aluminium oxide in the middle, the momentum carries it forward but when it comes into contact with the insulator at the back it finds an easier route is back the way it came. The silver then conducts the spell through the shield and out the way it came. Obviously this happens really quickly so it appears as if the spell was just blocked by the shield."

Harry was a little confused but though t he had the gist if it.

"But, I thought you said nothing blocked the killing curse, why does this aluminium oxide?" He asked

"It doesn't," Thane replied, "The silver conducts the spell round and round in a circle, if you shot Avada kedavra at some aluminium oxide it would pass through it. But because the silver slows it's progress down, the spell goes through the easiest path which is back through the shield and through the air, which isn't as much of an insulator. The point is that you've got to find a way around the rules, the apparation shield will effectively block the killing curse. It works, as the name implies, in the same way as apparation. When you slash your wand through the air, you slash a hole in the very essence of the universe, space-time. When a spell enters, you can relax your concentration and the rip heals, sending the spell into limbo. It can't stay there indefinitely though and when you open another rip it exit, coming flying out as though it was simply stopped, picked up and started again."

"So you're telling me that this shield can block any spell?" Harry asked, incredulous as to why no one had ever thought to mention it before.

"Although the words shield and block are quite inaccurate, as we've discussed, yes. But, as I'm sure you've learnt now that every spell has weaknesses. Some spells are quicker than others, some spells are blocked more easily, some are easier to undo the effects, others take longer to perform. No spell is perfect, otherwise every wizard would use it all the time."

"So what weaknesses does it have?"

"Well, for a start it takes a hell of a lot of power to perform," Remus piped up, having been listening intently during the conversation.

"Well quite," Thane confirmed, "you saw the moment I picked to perform the spell during our duel, I had to summon up all my magical reserves and still collapsed shortly afterwards from magical exhaustion as well as physical exhaustion. Very few wizards or witches can perform the spell, it also takes awhile to conjure and the last thing you want when there's a killing curse whizzing towards you is to be stood there performing a long and complicated charm. Don't get me wrong though, Harry," he said, seeing the look of disappointment on his face, "if performed correctly and at the right

moment, this spell can and will save your life or, as I proved, win you a duel.”

“Will you teach me?” Harry asked his professor enthusiastically. Thane thought for a moment and then nodded.

“Normally I would say that the spell is far too advanced for someone your age,” he said, echoing Remus’ words in his third year, “but you have proved to me that your not an ordinary wizard. Yes Harry I’ll teach you, but not tonight. It’s late and I don’t know about you two but I’m exhausted and I’m going to bed.”

Looking down at his watch, Harry saw that it was now gone one o’clock in the morning and decided that he too would turn in for the night. Bidding everyone goodnight, he returned to his new room and laid down on his bed, thinking as he was drifting off that it had been a very long, but very rewarding day.

-O-

Harry’s eyes snapped open five hours later and jumped up to begin his morning run, only to collapse back onto his bed realising that, not only had some idiot come into his room in the night and removed all of his saliva, the same idiot had then proceeded to whack him around the head with a large sledgehammer.

Forcing himself up, he stumbled downstairs and into the kitchen where Remus was laying dead on the table. At least Harry assumed he was dead until he let out a groan of pain as Harry noisily (to his ears) slid back his chair and sat down.

“Morning Harry,” came the incessantly cheery voice of Thane Harding. Harry could do little more than grunt in reply and Thane laughed. “Here have a drink”, he continued, placing a bubbling and smoking green concoction in front of both him and Remus. The disgust must have shown on his face because Thane smiled at him and said, “Believe me, it’s a lot better than it looks.”

Taking a gulp from the glass, Harry in fact found the potion to be pretty much tasteless. As it slid down his throat, however, Harry felt

his headache start to clear and the moisture return to his mouth and the thumping of Thane's voice, which had previously been threatening to deafen him, receded into a quiet chat.

"Good no?" he smirked at Harry's reaction

"Good, it's a bloody miracle", came Remus' reply from next to Harry, his old professor having been resurrected from the dead.

"It's a family recipe. So what are your plans today Harry?" he asked

"Well first of all I'm going to go for my morning run and then I'm going to come back here to learn how to perform the apparation shield."

Remus smiled, "I thought you might say that. It might be best though to avoid drinking such copious amounts of alcohol if we're going to be training."

"Don't bad mouth the alcohol Remus," Harry replied as he walked away for his morning run, "I felt great after the alcohol, it was the sleep that was the killer."

Coming in from his run around the block (disguised by a couple of neat transfiguration spells), Harry came back into the house, showered and changed before fetching his friends and teachers back up to his room.

"Welcome to our training room." Harry announced, motioning to the foot of his bed.

"Don't panic Remus but I think he's lost it," came Thane's reply. Harry just opened the fourth compartment of his trunk and beckoned for them to follow. Entering the duelling arena, both Thane and Remus stopped and stood still, looking around the place with their mouths agape.

"Bloody hell Harry!" Remus eloquently put it, "I wondered how you had been training before the cave but I didn't even consider anything like this."

“Trimble’s finest creation,” Harry responded, “One ordinary compartment, Two magically expanded compartments, a library and sitting room, a professional standard greenhouse, a magically refilling kitchen and of course a large and fully equipped duelling chamber, all protected by a complex shield charm, a hand print lock and a password. ”

The two men looked at Harry shocked, sometimes Harry forgot just how special this trunk was.

“My trunk has a fake bottom with a secret bit at the bottom to hide my personal possessions.” Came Thane’s slightly raving reply.

Harry had to smile and brought them out of their daze by waving his hand in front of their faces.

“Aren’t you supposed to be teaching me the apparation shield right about now? You know, rather than gormlessly staring around my trunk.

“Yes, right,” Thane replied, “if you’ll take your wand out Harry we’ll begin.”

They made their way onto the duelling platform, and Remus dropped back a little to observe while Thane took charge of the teaching for the time being.

“Now I noticed that while you were duelling, you would sometimes stop and summon up as much power as you could, delving deep inside yourself and finding magical inner core before forcing all of your magic to your fingertips as you must do with wandless magic. This is very important with this spell because as I said it is very, very advanced, and even someone with as much power as yourself Harry wants to put as much power as possible into the shield. What I then need you to do is to get into your head that the air around you is not empty, it is filled with, not only oxygen and nitrogen molecules and all that, but is made up of, as everything in this universe is, space-time. Though of course it isn’t, for the point of this exercise I want you to think of space-time as a solid mass so it can be bent, manipulated and broken. Don’t do this now, but when you are ready, when you

have summoned as much power as you can, slash your wand through the air and force your magic to channel through your wand and rip through space-time like a knife through paper. After you've been able to successfully create the rip a few times I will then send a spell into the. After it has entered you can then relax and allow the rip to fade, after it has disappeared though you will have to make another rip appear behind me so the spell can reappear from limbo and back into existence. But we'll worry about that last but later, for now I want you to concentrate on actually creating the first rip, any questions?"

"Yes," Harry replied, "what happens if I don't rip space-time a second time and the spell has to stay in limbo?"

"After a time, the spell will return of it's own accord and that means a rip being created in space-time that's not controlled by a wizard and that is very dangerous. The rip, if left could start to grow, swallowing up anything it comes into contact with and it takes a lot more power to close a rip which you haven't created. If that were to happen here, it could take me, you and Remus hours just to heal it. The department of mysteries has a team of unspeakable who specialise in healing the any uncontrolled rips but it still takes the whole team of about six to do it. Luckily because so few people both know about the spell and have the power to perform it these incidents are very rare."

"Has it ever happened to you?"

"No, but your father and mad-eye taught me and if there are two people other than Dumbledore who you would want around in that sort of situation it's them."

"Can you do the spell Remus?" Harry asked, curious because of how much Thane was emphasising the power this spell took.

"I can, but I tend not to use it because it takes me so long to summon up the power and my shield is still very unreliable, often it will fail before the spell enters" Came Remus' reply. Harry was shocked, Remus was one of the most powerful wizards he knew and even he had difficulty, he was starting to doubt his ability to perform such a spell.

“What about witches and wizards in the order,” he asked.

It was Thane who replied this time. “Apart from Remus and I, only Dumbledore and Mad-eye that I know of.”

“Kingsley?”

“Me and Mad-eye tried to teach him a couple of years ago but we didn’t make much headway. But don’t doubt your power Harry,” he added, seeing the look on Harry’s face, “as the heir of Gryffindor, not to mention James and Lily’s son, you have inherited a lot of power and that is just starting to come through. I wouldn’t be teaching you the spell if I didn’t have every faith you could master it. Now if you’re ready, you may begin your meditation.”

Harry nodded and sat on the floor, his legs crossed in the lotus position and his eye closed. Completely learning his mind, Harry relaxed, delving deep within himself to find the centre of his magical power. Sensing his power all around him, a bright ethereal glow shining in his retina, despite his closed eyes, Harry knew that he had found his goal and reached out to his magic, forcing out into his fingertips. Standing, Harry opened his eyes and Thane and Remus, smiled, looking at each other significantly as they felt waves of power emanating from their young charge.

Harry then raised his wand and, concentrating as much as he could, slashed it downwards, forcing the raw magical power at his fingertips to rip the essence of the universe itself, to tear through space-time. The air where his wand had been, tore in front of his eyes, leaving only a line of darkness. Harry just had time to feel pleased with himself when he started to feel the strain on his mind and body, not to mention his magic. Harry collapsed to his knees and the rip faded as he succumbed to the blackness consuming him and fell into unconsciousness.

Harry’s eyes slowly opened and he looked up to see both Thane and Remus standing above him, Remus holding a goblet and both of them looking concerned. Seeing that he had rejoined the world of the living, they helped him to sit up and Remus offered him the goblet.

“Here drink this, it’s pepper-up potion.” he said.

Harry gratefully took the cup and drank deeply, feeling his energy slowly return to him. Getting to his feet he turned to see that the two men were beaming at him.

"What?" he asked, feeling slightly creeped out.

"That was very impressive", Remus answered, still smiling at him.

"I was only able to hold the rip for a few seconds then I passed out for, how long was I out?"

"Only a couple of minutes," it was Thane who replied this time, "and I expected you to pass out Harry, sorry, I know I didn't tell you but I didn't want to add to the pressure I'd already built up. What I wasn't expecting was for you to be able to conjure the shield, at least not the first time. No one conjures it the first time, there's usually just a cracking sound and the effort causes the would-be caster to fall unconscious. It took me a dozen tries to get to the stage you're at now and I was twenty one, and had fully grown into my powers. When you're ready Harry, and if you want to continue of course, you can try again."

"I'm ready", came Harry's reply

They continued going over the spell for the next few hours and Harry was getting better and better. As the clock struck one, Harry managed to stay conscious while maintaining the shield for about twenty seconds, when he started to feel the strain, he then relaxed his magic and let the universe heal itself.

"Excellent Harry", Thane said, "I think we should leave it there for today, we wouldn't want you to completely exhaust yourself and I'm hungry." He turned to his old friend,

"Remus what's for dinner mate."

"Well I'm hardly Molly Weasley but I reckon I can knock up a shepherd's pie." Remus replied

The three of them went down to the kitchen and soon Remus was serving out shepherd's pie. Just as Harry was starting to dig into his food, there was a crash from inside the living room. Three wands were whipped out of pockets as three men jumped to their feet and ran into the living room, ready for battle. On entering the room, however, they found nothing but a smashed window and what looked like a small furry ball on the floor.

"It's alright," Harry told Thane and Remus, "it's Pig, Ron's owl."

Reaching down, Harry picked up the little owl and, with a wave of his wand, healed his wounds and brought him out of unconsciousness with a whispered, "Enervate!" As the owl opened its eyes and started flying around the room, Harry noticed a note attached to its leg and, with the reflexes of a born seeker, grabbed it out of the air. Untying the parchment from the owl, Harry thanked the owl and released it from his grasp, watching as it flew two laps around the room before whizzing out of the broken window.

Seeing his name on the envelope, Harry returned to the kitchen, followed by Thane and Remus who, having fixed the window, sat down and resumed the eating of their lunch. Harry, meanwhile, opened the letter and smiled as he recognised the Ginny Weasley's neat handwriting.

Dear Harry,

How are you? As predicted, I'm going insane here, with only Ron and my parents for company. Luckily for me though, Ron has taken a part time job at Fred and George's shop so I'll have a bit of time to my self. I knew it's a bit soon but, I was wondering if I could come round for a bit tomorrow, Ron's starting his new job and Dad's at work and Mum's going into London so I'll just be bored here. Write back when (and if - as you know Pig's not the most reliable owl) you get this letter.

Lots of Love

Ginny xxx

“Remus, is it alright if Ginny comes around for the day tomorrow?” Harry asked

“This is your house too now Harry, you can invite whoever you want around, it’s fine with me.”

“Thanks” Harry replies, running off upstairs to write his reply.

The rest of the day passed quickly as they just messed around and talked and Harry took this time to fill Remus and Thane in on what he had been doing over the summer and the school year so far.

Pretty soon it was quarter past ten on the twenty third of December and Ginny was due to arrive in fifteen minutes. For some inexplicable reason, he couldn’t stop himself from feeling nervous and this did not go unnoticed (or un-mocked) by Thane and Remus.

“Why so nervous Harry?” Remus asked, with an all too knowing smile on his face, “I mean she’s just your friend right?”

“I’m not nervous Remus,” Harry lied for the fifth time in the last three minutes.

On the dot of eleven the doorbell, everyone looked at Harry but he just stood there looking at his watch.

“Aren’t you going to get the door?” Remus asked

“If I get it straight away it’ll look like I’ve been stood here waiting” Harry replied as though it was obvious

“Well you have,” Thane contributed

“Yes but she doesn’t have to know that does she?” Harry said, shaking his head in exasperation.

The doorbell went again and, after waiting a few more seconds, Harry opened it to find Ginny standing there, her arm raised ready to press the bell for the third time.

“Oh hi Gin” Harry said casually, “come on in.”

"Thanks," Ginny replied, "it's a nice place you've got here professor Lupin."

"Ginny I haven't been your professor for years, you can call me Remus"

"OK," Ginny replied, looking slightly uncomfortable about addressing her old professor by his first name, "Hi Professor Harding."

"Ginny, I haven't been your professor for days, you can call me Thane." Thane said, echoing Remus

"What do you mean? You're still our teacher aren't you?" Ginny asked looking slightly worried.

"Not during the Christmas holidays I'm not" was Thane's reply

"Anyway come in Ginny," Harry told his friend, who was still stood just inside the door, "how about a game of chess."

"Harry I was taught how to play chess by Ron", Ginny replied playfully and boastfully, "and you suck at it."

"Oh yeah," Harry said, "but Remus doesn't, Remus, take her down for me."

The four of them spent the next few hours playing chess and talking, as it turned out, Remus and Ginny were fairly evenly matched and Thane was almost as bad as Harry, leading to some very interesting games (and some equally as uninteresting and one-sided ones). Harry also filled Ginny in on the situation with him and Remus and how they would be living together from now on.

"So you don't have to go back to the Dursleys anymore? What about the blood protection?" Ginny asked, managing to look both happy for Harry and concerned, two emotions, Harry mused, it must be difficult to get onto the one face at the same time.

"No I don't have to go back for them anymore, from now on, all my holidays will be spent here at Remus'-" Remus looked at him

pointedly, "I mean our house. As for the blood protection, yes it will be gone, but this house is very protected and I can add further wards to it. Plus, what's the point of being protected from an evil dark lord just to be abused by a muggle. Oh and I don't think the Dursleys will be too happy about me coming back after what I did to Vernon."

"I take your point," Ginny responded, "congratulations Harry, I'm really pleased for you and congratulations Remus as well."

"Aren't you going to congratulate me?" Thane asked, pretending to be hurt.

"Why would I congratulate you?" Ginny replied, looking genuinely confused

"I like to be congratulated." Came Thane's nonsensical reply.

The rest of the afternoon was spent like this with them talking and occasionally playing games of chess or exploding snap. As time went by, Ginny started to relax around her old and current professor, getting along well with Thane's slightly surreal sense of humour and Remus' more civilised but just as fun-loving attitude that she had never seen before. After dinner, Ginny announced that she had to get back home as her mum would be getting back soon and Ginny had said she'd be there when she got back. As they parted company, Ginny told them that they would be able to come over again the day after boxing day, this time with Ron who had the day off.

The next day was Christmas eve and this signalled the arrival of Tonks who was coming over from her parents to spend Christmas with them. As the time drew nearer to her arrival, Harry Remus and Thane were to be found waiting by the door once more, this time with Remus pacing and trying not to look nervous.

"So the mocker has become the mocked eh Remus?" Harry said with a smirk at his guardian

"What? I'm not nervous." Remus was a worse liar than Harry.

“He’s right Harry,” Thane agreed, getting a strange look from both of them, “He’s clearly just saving money on a carpenter by pacing a hole in the floor”

Harry smiled but Remus looked at him slightly confused; “Why would I need a carpenter, I could just transfigure the carpet.”

Thane rolled his eyes, “It’s a joke Remus, it doesn’t have to make sense.”

Their conversation was ended by the ring of the doorbell followed by the sounds of two men laughing as they watched the third practically jump out of his skin as if he’d just been electrocuted. As Remus opened the door Nymphadora Tonks bounded into the room, flinging her arms around the werewolf.

“Hi Remus,” she said, pulling away from him, “Hi guys.”

“Hey Tonks,” Harry replied, “ come on in”

The next day, Harry jumped up at six am as usual and, after going for his morning run, proceeded to run around the house, shouting and knocking on doors like an excited six year old until they all got up. Tonks proved easiest to rouse, seeming almost as hyper as Harry as she ran out of the room, tripped and almost broke her neck as she fell down the stairs. Walking into the living room, Harry’s eyes lit up as he saw the room filled with presents.

The four of them spent the next hour or so opening their presents, thanking each other as they ripped the wrapping paper off a gift from someone present. Harry was especially pleased with his haul this year, he had received a beautiful set of battle robes from Remus and Sirius (bought before he died obviously); they protected him from minor curses and took some of the sting out of mid-range ones, they also wouldn’t rip or tear easily which was useful due to the amount of diving about he did during duels. Tonks had gotten a massive box of assorted wizarding sweets, from Ginny he had received a solid silver necklace with a rampant lion hanging from the bottom. He had predictably received a massive hamper of Weasley wizarding

wheezes products from Ron and he was pleasantly surprised to find a gift from Hermione (strangely enough she had bought him a book).

Harry reached his last present and knew that it must be from Thane. Opening it, he was somewhat surprised to find a goblet of blood red, steaming liquid, feeling confused he turned to his professor who he saw was looking at him.

"Do I want to know?" he asked

"Oh you want to know," Thane replied with a smile

"OK, what is it then?"

Thane's only answer was to say; "Drink it."

Feeling a little nervous, Harry downed it, fighting the urge to gag from the awful taste. For a few seconds nothing happened, but then suddenly, he noticed an ache developing in his head and his vision blurring. His first absurd thought was that he had been poisoned but as he looked up at him, Thane simply smiled encouragingly and said; "Take off your glasses."

Harry complied and gasped as his headache vanished and his vision cleared.

"You cured my eyesight?" Harry asked barely able to believe it. Just then however, his vision started to blur again before returning once more to perfect lucidity.

"Come here Harry," said Thane, "the potion is only part of the process. I need to lock it in so to speak."

After Harry had settled himself down on the sofa next to his teacher, Thane raised his wand and with a wave over Harry's face whispered; "Acies reconcilius!" Harry felt a slight pain behind his eyes but this soon faded and Harry's face broke into a wide grin as he looked around the room, taking in details with crystal clear clarity. Looking at Thane with great gratitude he said; "Thane, I don't what to say, just

thank you. But I don't understand, I've seen lots of wizards and witches in glasses, why don't they just do what you did?"

"The potion is very rare," came Thane's reply, "and the spell isn't one any wizard could perform. And I suppose some people just like to wear them."

"Well thanks a lot. And thanks for the battle robes Remus, I know they must have been expensive and for the sweets Tonks."

Just as with every Christmas, the rest of the day was spent, trying out presents and eating huge amounts of turkey and chocolate and, before they knew it, another Christmas was over and the run-up to new year had begun. The day after boxing day saw Ron and Ginny coming over for the day and Harry knew that it was going to be a hectic day.

The first sign that it wouldn't be the most relaxing of visits came at lunch, when, as they all started to tuck into the food, Ron kept glancing up at the others.

"Is it safe for me to eat this mate?" Harry whispered, careful not to draw anyone's attention.

"Yes. It's safe for you to eat, just as long as you don't take a liking to Tonks', Remus' or Harding's chips."

At that moment, as the unwitting victims continued to eat, banners started to form over their heads. Harry watched enthralled as letters started to form on the banners, spelling out the words, 'I love Tonks,' above Remus, 'I love Remus,' above Tonks and 'I love Snape' above Thane. Harry fought not to laugh but it was a losing battle and with a last look at Thane's banner burst out laughing. Ginny looked up confused but joined Harry in fits of giggles as she spotted the banners. Ron had so far managed to keep quite, tears streaming silently down his face as he fought the urge, but he too succumbed and the three adults looked up alarmed.

They looked around to find the source of their mirth but came up blank, finally looking at each other confused. Harry was sure that the

game was up, but not one of them looked up above their heads and, still nonplussed, Thane asked;

“Am I missing something?”

Harry leaned towards Ron and whispered, “Can they not see the signs?”

“No, that’s the genius of it, no one that has the spell on them can see it on themselves or anyone else. Always said that Fred and George were geniuses.”

“No Thane,” Harry replied to his professor’s question, “we’re just laughing at erm life in general.” He invented, knowing that there was no way any of them would buy it.

For the remainder of the day, Harry had to fight down a laugh every time he looked at any of the adults. The three of them remained completely oblivious to their situation until late evening when Mrs. Weasley came to pick up Ron and Ginny.

“Hello Thane, how were-” Mrs. Weasley faltered, seeing the banner still suspended above his head.

“Hi Molly,” Remus said as he and Tonks came walked into the living room. Realisation dawned on Molly Weasley and she turned and looked at Harry, Ron and Ginny who were looking determinedly innocent and not meeting her eyes.

“Thane, Remus, Tonks do you know that you have banners over your head, proclaiming your love for certain individuals?” She asked.

“What?” Tonks asked incredulously. In reply, Molly waved her wand and with the word

“Finite!” the disguising spell was lifted and they all looked at each other and after a few seconds of shock, burst out laughing, and conjured a mirror to look at what they themselves looking.

“Next time you come around you guys are dead.” Thane said threateningly, his smile giving away his good humour. And on that

note, Ginny and Ron left, leaving the Thane, Remus and Tonks all looking accusingly at Harry.

“Explanations please.” Remus said, his arms crossed.

The remainder of the holidays was spent in a similar manner, Ron and Ginny would come around regularly and they would just hang around and have fun, the incident on the day after boxing day had led to something of a prank war. Harry, Ron and Ginny were very careful around Thane, Remus and Tonks after their prank, but Harry who was living with them could not hide forever.

One night, a few days after the original practical joke, found Thane, Remus and Tonks sneaking silently into Harry's room. They then stunned him to make sure he remained asleep and proceeded to pour a potion of the marauder's invention down his throat. Thane then waved his wand and performed a complicated little charm over Harry before enervating him and sneaking back out of his room as if they had never been there. Harry had awoken unaware that anything was wrong and remained that way until Ron and Ginny arrived, though he noticed that the three adults seemed both suspicious and a little stand offish.

When his two friends arrived, however, and Harry went to greet them with a handshake and a hug (for Ron and Ginny respectively). The three pranksters started laughing and Remus waved his wand over Harry, muttering; “Fibite incantatem!” The illusion charm placed on Harry by Thane the previous night faded away and Harry gasped as he saw that his skin was actually a vivid green and his hair a brilliant blue. He then noticed that the colour had seemingly leaked from his arms on to Ron and Ginny when he touched them and in a matter of seconds they too were green and blue. They stood there shocked for a while as Thane Tonks and Remus howled with laughter, but then Harry turned to face them and, smiling and shaking his head, said; “OK I'll give you that one guys, but don't for a minute think that this is over for we shall have our revenge.” With that the three of them walked into the living room and, as if nothing odd had happened at all, started to play chess.

The prank war continued over the two weeks in the holiday, resuming every time Ron and Ginny came round (and sometimes in-between those times). In the evenings, Thane and Remus and sometimes Tonks helped Harry to train (and vice versa), they kept going until Harry was able to sustain the apparation shield for a good thirty seconds and then close it, opening another rip behind his target, getting faster and more efficient every time. Only then, more than a week into the holidays, did the three of them progress to other very powerful spells and curses. After training the four of them would stay up late into the night, talking (and sometimes drinking), swapping stories and anecdotes and generally enjoying each others company.

One day, after new years (which passed fairly quietly - Molly wanted her whole family together and Harry elected to stay with Remus, Thane and Tonks), saw Harry finding himself alone with Ginny. Ron had gone home early, muttering something about Fred and George not paying him enough for what they did to him and before Harry knew it, he turned around to find he and Ginny had the house to themselves, Thane, Remus and Tonks being at an order meeting.

As always, Harry was captivated by her and was feeling very nervous as he stood in the living room of the unusually quiet house looking at Ginny who sat on the sofa. The tension in the room grew quite thick and Harry was searching desperately for something smart and funny to say but then it wasn't a problem any more. Ginny smiled a beautiful smile at him and with the simple request; "Chess?" put him completely at ease and wondering how he could ever feel so nervous around someone who had grown so important to him.

"I better go Harry, Mum'll be expecting me back." It was a couple of hours later, hours which had been spent with carefree fun and laughter (and chess), but now the gut wrenching nerves returned as Harry prepared to say something. Ginny had her back to him, walking towards the door when Harry shouted her back; "Ginny wait."

Ginny turned back to face him and Harry spoke again; "I was wondering if you wanted to go into Hogsmeade with me tomorrow, you know just to spend the day there. Remus, Thane and Tonks have an order thing so it won't be a problem."

Ginny looked shocked, an expression soon to be replaced with hopeful optimism.

“You mean just the two of us? No Ron, no parents?” she asked

“Yeah,” Harry replied, “I thought it might be fun to just go together.”

Ginny beamed at him, “I would love to”, she said, running up to him and putting her arms around him in a gentle hug.

“I really should go.” she said, eventually breaking the hug.

“OK, but Ginny,” Harry began, “it’s very important that no one knows about this, not even your parents. It’s a big enough risk as it is to go out just the two of us, we don’t want word to spread.”

“OK Harry,” Ginny agreed, “it’ll be our secret” and she smiled at him again, turning to leave. At that moment, however, none other than professor Severus Snape burst through the door, to be met with the raised wands of both Harry and Ginny, who had drawn at the bang accompanied by the door flying open and hitting the wall.

Snape sneered at them, “I’m looking for someone Potter, perhaps you know him, he’s big and furry and supposedly lives at this address.”

“You better watch what you say about Remus, Snape” Harry replied dangerously, “no points to be docked here if a hogwarts student should break a rule. Violent conduct for example, or perhaps murder. He’s not in anyway, he’s at the order meeting and may I ask why you’re not attending this evening.”

Snape glared at Harry and replied in a quiet but ever threatening tone of voice; “My business is my own Potter. I don’t have to explain myself to the likes of you.”

With that and a billowing of his cloak, Snape abruptly marched out of the door, shutting it on his way out with a wave of his wand. “Git.” Harry and Ginny said at the same time, before looking at each other and laughing. Ginny then finally managed to get out of the door, knowing that she would get a telling off for her mother for being so

late but, at the same time, not caring in the slightest. She had a date with Harry Potter.

It was the day of the date and Harry was feeling a little nervous, he knew that Remus, Thane and Tonks had noticed something, but he knew he couldn't tell them. First of all the mocking would be merciless and also, he had made Ginny promise not to tell anyone and if he was caught doing exactly what he had warned against he didn't think Ginny would be too happy.

So he found himself in the living room, sitting with his friends and for the first time since he had arrived feeling slightly uncomfortable, not quite knowing what to say.

Then a thought struck him; "How exactly was Snape able to just burst in the door?" he asked, turning to face Remus, "What happened to the wards."

"The wards are still active," Remus replied, "but they don't apply to order members. When someone is inducted into the order, they have to drink a potion and this allows them to bypass the wards various members put on their properties."

"Surely you don't still entirely trust the order," Harry asked incredulously, "what about Dumbledore, what about Snape?"

Remus seemed to be considering his answer, but Thane beat him to it, seemingly choosing his words very carefully.

"Harry, I know that you and Dumbledore aren't on the best of terms at the moment, and I've already told you that all of us and many more order members agree with you, I think you have every right to be angry. However, he's not an evil man, Dumbledore isn't going to come charging in here and attack you. What he is, is a very powerful wizard and he's the best person in the world to set up wards for you."

Harry begrudgingly accepted this logic but had one last question about it; "And what about Snape?"

It was Remus who answered this time, looking highly uncomfortable; "I admit that I have never entirely trusted Dumbledore's judgement of

Snape and when the wards were placed I never considered this scenario. But you're right Harry, Snape is a bit of a loose cannon and an unnecessary risk, what would you have us do about it?"

Harry thought for a moment before answering; "We need to update the wards." He said, "You've got about three hour before you've got to go to the order meeting right?' Well the three of us can update the wards ourselves, add an extra charm so that no one with a dark mark can enter."

"Dumbledore won't like that." Thanes replied, "I'm in."

"Me too." Remus added.

"Tonks?" Harry asked, looking at her and noticing her hesitation, "You can consider it making up for attacking me in the alley last year."

Tonks smiled, looking a little guilty, "count me in."

And that is how they spent the next two and a half hours; tracing the outlines of the house, undoing the wards so they could add an extra, adding the charm to reject anyone who possessed the dark magical signal of the dark mark and finally putting the wards back together again. It proved difficult work, especially undoing Dumbledore's charms, but they split of into pairs; and together were able to perform the relevant charms.

At half two, the three order members left for their meeting and Harry rushed upstairs to get changed. He had just given up trying to tame his hair when the doorbell rung and Harry opened the door to his date for the day. Ginny looked even more beautiful than ever and Harry's greeting stuck in his throat as he took in every detail of her. "Hi" he eventually said, stepping back to let her in.

"Hi." Ginny smiled back at him, "ready to go?"

"Yes, just one second, I just have to add some protection."

With that simple statement, Harry took out his wand and started waving it over Ginny in a series of complicated patterns, muttering

under his breath. A few minutes later he seemed satisfied and turned his wand on himself, proceeding with the same process. Ginny watched as Harry's face and body seemed to shimmer out of focus, before returning to normal.

"What was that?" she asked

"Illusion charm. We both now look completely different, modelled on some random people out of a magazine."

Ginny looked at Harry, and herself, taking in their features and deciding that they did indeed look exactly the same.

"And you're sure it worked?"

Harry smiled, "An added charm so that to each other we appear normal, the illusion charm is after all for third parties. I don't want to go out with some girl from the Madam Malkin catalogue"

With that, Harry, intertwined his fingers in Ginny's and hand in hand, Harry disappeared them away. They appeared a split second later in Hogsmeade, and looked around to acclimatise to their new surroundings. "So where to?" Harry asked, "I'm easy, of course if you ask to go to Madam Pudifoots I will have to kill you but apart from that..."

"How about we just walk around for a bit and look around the shops." Hogsemae, like Diagon alley had suffered as a result of the war. There were far fewer people around than ordinarily and those who were there seemed to be so out of necessity rather than choice. They were here to forget about the war though, and, still hand in hand, they made their way to Honeydukes.

Going on a date with Ginny was poles apart from the disaster with Cho last year. Conversation came easily and there was no hint of awkwardness. They talked about quidditch, about Ron and Hermione, they talked about the DA and the progress they were making and every other subject under the sun, though carefully avoiding the war. After just walking for an hour, they were starting to get tired, not to mention thirsty, so they decided to stop at the three broomsticks.

Ordering their drinks, they sat down in a private booth and there was a brief lull in the conversation.

"So what's it like living with Thane, Remus and Tonks permanently? Do you ever actually sleep or are you too busy, attacking and pranking each other?" Ginny asked

"No, we sleep occasionally, though not much obviously. It's great living with them, The three of them play off each other and it's just constantly fun and easy-going."

"No chores, staying up late drinking and not getting told off for pranking the adults, I might just have to move in myself." Ginny replied

"Well I for one would have no problem with that."

"Well maybe-"

Ginny's words were lost as all of a sudden there was a BANG! followed by screams of terror. Harry and Ginny both whipped their wands out and made their way to the door, walking slowly and peering out so as not to give themselves away, while analysing what was going on. Harry heard Ginny gasp beside him, as they looked out onto Hogsmeade high street to see dozens of death eaters swarming around the town.

Little resistance was being made, as the dark lord's loyal servants set fire to buildings, and arbitrarily attacked people. The two of them ducked back inside as a number of death eaters walked passed, only feet away from them;

"Spread out and search for Potter," One of them said, "and if you can bring in the Weasley girl."

"They know we're here," Harry muttered to himself. He then forced himself to look back outside at the chaos that reigned.

Harry felt a sudden surge of anger as he spotted a young boy cowering in front of a shop. He must have only been about four, but

the death eaters made no allowance and two of them were standing in front of him, their wands raised. Harry felt a rush of power and immediately charged out of the pub, raising his wand and steadying it at his enemies.

“Extrodus Duplico!”

Two huge bolts of electric blue flew out of his wand, flying at massive speed at the unsuspecting death eaters. They both turned as the spells neared them, sensing the danger that they were in. Then the spells hit. One of them didn’t even have time to move and was blown up into the air and away from the child, landing a hundred yards from where he had stood and not getting up again. The other one was more skilful and had better reactions, managing to raise an ‘aegis ultimus’ shield in time. It made little difference though as Harry’s spell crashed through it as if it was made of paper, flinging the shocked death eater back ninety yards.

Harry then turned to see Ginny, battling a death eater in an alley, fortunately out of the view of any of the others. He made to go and help her but had to dive to the floor as a jet of green light passed mere feet above him. Three death eaters had seen his actions and had attacked this stranger, whom none of them recognised as the boy who lived. Harry rolled out of his dive and sprung to his feet only to find three ‘avada kedavras’ flying at his face. Knowing that there was no way he could raise an apparition shield in time, he instead shouted; “Arma Agentum!” Conjuring a shining silver shield.

The three deadly spells struck the shield and Harry felt the power of them as they combined and struggled against Harry’s shield. Harry had to use all of his concentration to fight off the power of the three curses, summoning as much power as he could. After what seemed like an age, but was in fact three seconds, the three bolts of green flew back at their shocked casters, who just managed to duck out the way.

As Harry faced his opponents, he knew that something was wrong. Something felt different. As the death eaters momentarily froze in shock, Harry realised that with the effort of fighting off the killing curses, his illusion

charm had slipped. The death eaters knew exactly who he was and it didn't take them long to overcome their shock.

"It's Potter!", shouted the magically amplified voice of, Harry was surprised to note, Lucius Malfoy, who had been one of his opposing death eaters.

All of the death eaters within hearing distance stopped for a second. Then, all of a sudden, the air was filled with the pops of apparition, Harry tried to do the same and escape to safety but couldn't and realised that there must be an anti-apparition jinx in effect, one which apparently didn't affect the death eaters. In a fraction of a second, just as he had in Diagon Alley all those months ago, Harry Potter found himself surrounded.

Realising that there was no escape, but also knowing that he would never surrender. Harry pointed his wand straight ahead and, with his eyes glowing a vivid emerald green and magical power perceptibly emanating from him, calmly said;

"You know I'm getting the strangest feeling of déjà vu."

Harry knew that, even with all of his training and preparation, he was in big trouble. He was completely surrounded, no chance of escape and no way he could beat off his opponents without the wands behind him striking him down, the moment a word escaped his lips. The anti-apparation jinx was still in effect and no one else knew, or cared he was trapped. Most of them were still fleeing for their lives, and the ones who had stayed to fight were busy battling an enemy far superior in numbers and power.

This he analysed in a fraction of a second, and came up with a conclusion; he was screwed. It was at that moment, however, that Ginny appeared behind the death eaters, having seen Harry's predicament and knowing that she had to help him, even if she had no idea how.

"Harry!" she shouted and the death eaters instinctively turned at the noise. Ginny then scooped a stone up off the floor and flung it into the air, before dodging back into the alley to avoid the curses flying at her.

As the stone flew through the air, the death eaters started to turn back towards Harry and he suddenly realised what Ginny had in mind. Pointing his wand at the rock as it reached the peak of its arc in the air, he said; "Portus!" and was relieved to see it glow a bright blue. The death eaters in front of him, having heard the spell, directed their wands at him, shouting the incantations of various dark and evil curses. A wall of green and black flew at Harry, but he was ready for it and pointed his wand down towards the floor, shouting "Pulsum!"

The propulsion spell flung Harry into the air and over the spells cast at him, which hit the death eaters on the opposite side of the circle. Harry, meanwhile, flew towards the newly created portkey, which he plucked out of the air. Feeling the familiar tug behind his navel, Harry was sucked out of reality and transported through limbo. He felt his feet touch solid ground a couple of seconds later and whipped around to face the death eaters, throwing the stone/portkey at them. Steadying his wand at the stone as it sailed through the air, Harry yelled; "Confringo!"

The stone exploded as the spell struck it, the fireball enveloping the death eaters who hadn't already been hit by their comrades and

blowing them in all directions. Harry knew that his respite would be brief and took advantage of it by pulling what looked like a golden coin from his pocket. He then tapped his wand on to the coin and a message appeared on the outer rim; 'Death eater attack on Hogsmeade. All soldiers report.'

Harry just had time to send out the message, before he was forced to duck as two bolts of green light flew at him. Rolling from his position on the floor, he was shocked to see Lucius Malfoy and another of the death eaters he thought he had just exploded. Then it dawned on him. The two of them must have apparated away as they realised what Harry was doing. It was only when his two opponents spread out and started shooting deadly curses at him did Harry realise that he had missed his opportunity to counter their assault.

With bolts of green and black flying at him from two sides, Harry knew that there was no way he would be able to dodge the all of spells and decided he would have to trust his life to a spell he had never even tried before. Concentrating with all his might he shouted; "Arma Agentus Duplico!"

Harry was, too say the least, relieved when two shields materialised either side of him and rebounded the curses back at their original casters. Taking advantage of the distraction, Harry spun around, firing ropes at the ankles of the unknown death eater and pulling his feet from under him as he continued to spin on his heel. As he reached the point when he was facing Malfoy senior, he pointed his wand at the ground at his feet and cried; "Motus Humo!"

Both death eaters fell to the ground. Harry then pointed his wand at Malfoy and his free hand at the other death eater, silently firing stunners at the both of them. He heard a yelp from behind him and knew that the unnamed death eater had fallen. Malfoy on the other hand managed to roll out of the way and jumped back to his feet, only to jump out of the way again as the *condolesco* curse came flying at him via Harry's wand.

From the ground, however, Malfoy shot the killing curse at Harry who rolled behind a wall to avoid it. Malfoy stumbled to his feet and

steadied his wand at his opponent as he emerged from behind the wall. Malfoy yelled; "Avada Kedavra!"

The green light shot directly at its target who offered no resistance. Malfoy's face broke out into an expression of shock and delight as he realised that as the killer of the boy who live, his position as the dark lord's favourite had been assured. This expression turned to pain, however, as he was blasted forward, landing fifty yards away, battered and unconscious. As he was sent flying forward, Harry Potter was revealed behind him, a satisfied smirk on his face and his wand outstretched.

The beam of the killing curse passed straight through the illusion of Harry that he had conjured which then faded into thin air. Harry just had time to feel pleased with himself as he bound Malfoy to the floor, when a series of pops wrung through the air once again. Harry turned, his wand outstretched to face the potential threat, only to find all forty soldiers of the DA, plus, Harry was pleased to note, Hermione stood there, all looking at him.

"What time do you call this?" Harry asked them.

"Sorry we took so long sir", it was Neville who spoke and Harry had to roll at his eyes at the way most of the DA insisted on addressing him, "but most of the members can't apparate so those who could had to pick us up. We then found that we couldn't apparate into Hogsmeade so Hermione, Ron and I had to make a portkey."

Harry nodded in response, "OK, spread out in the threes and try not to get separated, don't take on multiple opponents at once if its avoidable. If you need help just shout out and anyone who is near is to help them." He gave his orders, "Oh and if Voldemort should appear, none of you are to even consider duelling him. That's my job."

The vast number of people just appearing from nowhere had gained the death eater's attention and they all turned to the group and started firing curses at them. All forty members dropped to the floor, before springing back up, their wands drawn and started to return fire. Even with the added support, Harry and his troops were outnumbered by almost two to one and soon everyone was duelling at least one

opponent. Harry knew that he had to reduce the number of death eaters in the fight and quickly. Even though the DA had improved beyond recognition in talent and power in the last few months, Harry knew that his troops were not yet a match for the death eaters and especially not this many.

With this thought, a plan formed in his mind and he picked up a stone off the floor. Tapping it with his wand, Harry muttered; "Portus!" The stone glowed blue, before activating and transporting Harry into the midst of the death eaters. With a wave of his wand, as he landed in a side alley, slightly out of the way of the battle, Harry conjured dark, hooded robes and a death eater's mask for himself and emerged from the alley, a perfect replica of a death eater.

Making his way into a large crowd of the dark wizards, Harry started to silently stun them, one at a time. To any observer it would appear as if the spells from the DA were getting through and the death eaters continued to fire curses at the groups of students, unaware of the enemy within. Harry had stunned about six of them when he heard a scream from nearby. Turning his head at the sound, Harry spotted Hermione on the floor, two death eaters stood over her, their wands drawn.

Taking careful aim, Harry stunned one of them as he ran towards the scene, the other turned as he saw his comrade fall and conjured a silver shield. As far as he was concerned, the threat was, for the time being at least, dealt with and he turned back to Hermione to finish her off. He slashed his wand downwards, the words of the killing curse forming on his lips. Harry, in the meantime, had flicked his wand at Hermione and himself, conjuring bubbles which placed themselves over their head. He then flicked his wand once more, muttering the word; "Intransitus!"

A deafening white noise filled the air and everyone around Harry, pressed their hand to their ears, trying to stop the sound which was torturing their minds. The death eater next to Hermione, screamed in pain, being the closest to the source of the noise, and fell to his knees, his shield disappearing and his wand falling from his hand. Harry stopped the spell and, for good measure, stunned the death eater

who was still whimpering on the floor, before going over to Hermione and offering her his hand.

“It was the only way I could be sure of incapacitating him before he killed you. I don’t know how powerful he is, his shield may well have withstood anything I could throw at it. So even though what I used was a dark spell, it’s purpose was good and it was necessary.”

Hermione, nodded, looking like she was still in shock, but also looking at Harry as if she was seeing him in a new light. Without warning, she flung her arms around him; “I’m so sorry Harry, I-”

“Hermione, this isn’t the best time,” Harry interrupted, “we’ll talk about it later.”

With that, Harry and Hermione split away from each other. Harry’s actions had not gone unnoticed and his disguise was now defunct. He once again, flung himself into a duel and quickly incapacitated three more.

At that moment, however, Harry collapsed down on to one knee, brought down by the agony which wracked his body as his scar pulsed with pain. Knowing what was coming, Harry forced the pain to the back of his mind and stumbled to his feet, his wand in his hand and ready. As he anticipated, a second later, Lord Voldemort silently appeared onto the battle field, about two hundred yards away from where Harry was stood.

Knowing that now was his moment, that if he didn’t step in, his friends were in mortal danger, for the third time that day, Harry pointed his wand at a stone he had picked up from the floor and muttered; “Portus!”

He landed mere feet away from Voldemort, his wand drawn and ready. Slashing it through the air as soon as he felt his feet hit terra firma, he screamed “Conflus Visco!”

Voldemort’s reactions were far quicker than Harry could have anticipated and, though surprised, he managed to raise an advanced shield to block the dark ‘entrail exploding’ curse which flew at high

speed towards him. Harry had him on the back foot, however, and he wasn't going to give that up, so immediately followed the curse with a huge jet of fire which Harry shot at the dark lord with a cry of; "Deflagratio!"

Voldemort, with surprising agility, rolled backwards and, with a wave of his wand, conjured a wall of water, twenty foot thick. The two elements collided and did battle but it was the water that won out. The flames were extinguished in a wall of steam, and Harry fired a stunning curse through the steam, hoping to catch his opponent off guard. As it cleared, however, there was no one to be seen.

Harry immediately threw himself to the ground and rolled, neatly avoiding the three nasty looking curses which flew at his back. He jumped to his feet, his wand raised at the ready, but only to be confronted with two Bengal tigers, which started to circle him.

"You were a fool to challenge me Potter!" Voldemort mocked, "Your pathetic abilities are nothing compared to the power of Lord Voldemort, only heir of Slytherin."

Harry blocked the voice out of his head to focus on the task at hand. As one of the tigers pounced, Harry ducked under it, and, raising his wand to its underbelly, yelled; "Extrudo!" The poor creature was flung high into the air and landed far away from the battle, not getting up again. Harry didn't have time to celebrate, however, as that moment was when its brother decided to attack. Harry slashed his wand through the air and cried; "Avada Kedavra!", striking the creature dead as it pounced.

Harry turned to where his adversary was stood and quickly raised a silver shield, shouting "Arma Agentum!" as a killing curse came flying at his face. His shield took the power of the killing curse, but the tripping jinx which followed it, snuck under, striking his legs. As Harry fell, Harry knew that the time had come to put his recent training into practice and, slashed his wand vertically downwards, shouting; "Scissum Intermundia!"

Harry felt a wave of relief wash over him as, where his wand had traced, a rip appeared in the air itself and the spell flew straight into it.

The rip then healed as Harry relaxed the spell, only to open directly behind a stunned dark lord, who was forced to quickly raise a shield to block his own killing curse. Harry took advantage of the distraction to roll back up to his feet and, waving his wand, conjured a slim, shining sword, not dissimilar to the sword of Gryffindor he had wielded in his second year. He flung the sword at his opponents chest, and it was promptly followed by the 'condolesco curse', which silently escaped Harry's wand.

Voldemort, blocked the curse, with a second silver shield, before flourishing his wand at the sword, which was by now, little over a foot away from him. It stopped dead, mere inches away from his face and then transformed itself into a massive boa constrictor, which launched itself at Harry. Harry raised his own shield to block the deflected condolesco, before rolling out of the way of both the snake and the killing curse which followed it. He slashed his wand through the air, and with a squirt of blood, the snakes body fell to the ground, shortly followed by it's severed head.

Harry then tried to turn back towards Voldemort, but couldn't as he found himself bound by ropes which had spring from the floor. "A noble effort Potter," Voldemort began, "but you surely must have known that you never stood a chance. There will be no torture this time, no telling you of my plans, just a quick death. You have irked me for far to long now and I have learnt my lesson. Goodbye Potter. Avada Kedavra!"

Harry's wand pointed uselessly at the ground as the killing curse flew towards him and the anti-apparation jinx was still in effect. As soon as he had this thought, however, another one struck him. Concentrating as hard as he could Harry flexed his free hand, which pointed directly at he ropes and cried; "Portus!"

The ropes themselves glowed blue and, as soon as he felt his feet touch the ground, Harry wandlessly cut them away to face his enemy, who had turned on the spot, his wand raised. As soon as Harry was free of the ropes, he was forced to throw himself to the floor once more and started to roll as multiple spells flew out of Voldemort's and towards his young adversary. Harry then managed to roll backwards, out of the way of the spells and back up to his feet.

However, as he raised his wand for his counter-attack, he saw two great iron walls on either side of him. Thirty feet wide and ten feet thick, Voldemort had silently conjured them as Harry rolled back up to his feet. And as Harry pointed his wand at the dark lord, they started to move at high speed towards him, destined to crush him to a pulp. Knowing that he would never get around them in time, he pointed his wand to the ground and yelled; "Pulsum!"

He was flung high into the air and above the blocks of iron which smashed into each other. Still in the air, Harry directed his wand at Voldemort and cried; "Stupefy!"

Voldemort promptly raised and advanced protego charm to counter the simple spell, but was horrified when, instead of the red beam of the stunning curse, it was the deadly, green bolt of the killing curse which flew at him.

He just managed to cancel the advanced protego and raise a silver shield in time as the killing curse reached his shield, less than a second after it was raised. Harry, meanwhile, had lowered himself to the ground and silently sent a motus humo curse flying at his opponent, immediately followed by sectumsempra. Voldemort sensed the spells coming at him and apparated away. Harry turned to find a bolt of jet black flying at him and knew that was faced with a pure dark spell, one which could only be performed by an evil being.

Harry raised a shield, modifying the charm slightly, forcing some pure light magic into it to block the spell, as everyone knows, light cancels out darkness. As the spell flew at him, however, Voldemort raised his wand once more and, to Harry's horror, cried; "Scissum Intermundia!" The rip formed right in front of Harry's shield and swallowed the spell, a second later, a rip appeared immediately behind his back and, just as he turned to confront it, the spells struck Harry in the back. Harry was sent flying forwards, landing at Voldemort's feet. Harry was unaware of all this, however, as he was enveloped in pure agony. The world was spinning and Harry felt his energy and power draining out of him.

Knowing that he had to cancel the spell before he slipped into a coma, Harry felt out for what remained of his power and forced it to manifest itself around him. Voldemort watched all this, seemingly intrigued as his young enemy glowed a pure and blinding white as his light magic protected it's master from harm. Harry's energy was starting to return to him, the light was overriding the darkness and his vision started to clear. He immediately wished it hadn't, however, as he was confronted with a wand pointing directly between his eyes.

"Very impressive Potter," Voldemort said, "but lets see you throw off this one. Crucio!"

All that Harry knew for the next minute was absolute agony. All of his energy went into trying to prevent himself from screaming as pain wracked his body. He somehow managed to bite his tongue and eventually Voldemort seemed to tire of his game and released the spell. Harry looked up and knew that this was it. Voldemort steadied his wand once more and aimed his wand at Harry's heart. Harry grasped his own but realised that he could barely lift it off the ground.

"Goodbye Potter. There is no one to save you this time, your parents are dead, your friends are distracted fighting my army and Dumbledore is busy at the ministry and will be for hours, he doesn't even know you're here. And now that your own abilities have failed against me, there is only two more little words for me to say to you."

He pulled his wand back and flung it forwards at Harry. However, the two deadly words on his lips died as three spells of red and gold flew from nowhere and directly at him and Voldemort was forced to raise a shield to block the spells. The beams of light rebounded harmlessly off the shield and into the ground and Harry looked up to see Albus Dumbledore, Thane Harding and Remus Lupin standing with their wands outstretched, the latter two looking furious while the first wore his usual mask of calmness.

"You can't win Tom," Dumbledore spoke as the dark lord directed his wand at the three new arrivals, "now that the order has arrived you are hopelessly outnumbered."

Harry, with great effort, lifted his head to see that the order had arrived in full force and were already fighting and driving back the death eaters.

"Maybe today is not the day Hogsmeade will fall Dumbledore," Voldemort replied, "but I assure you that all will remember it as the day of the death of the great Albus Dumbledore."

With these final words, Voldemort slashed his wand at his old teacher, sending a bolt of green light soaring towards his chest. Dumbledore raised a shield which took the blow of the killing curse and the duel began. Thane and Remus, meanwhile, rushed over towards Harry and pulled him up to his feet.

"Here Harry, drink this. Don't worry it's only pepper up potion." Remus said as Thane supported the young Potter's weight.

Harry drank heavily from the goblet offered to him and felt his energy slowly starting to return to him as warmth spread throughout his body. Eventually, he was able to support himself, relieving the duty from Thane, and he scanned the battlefield, ready to re-enter the fight once more. The order and DA really did seem to have their enemies on the back foot, driving them back away from the village with their superior numbers and Harry was sure that the battle would not last much longer.

This feeling of elation at what he felt was their imminent success didn't last however. A feeling of great foreboding spread over Harry as an icy breeze swept through the village, seemingly taking all feelings of happiness and hope with it. The final screams of his mother rang in Harry's ears before he was able to block them out, as he turned and confirmed his fears. Over fifty Dementors were gliding towards the battle, the combatants of which, had paused momentarily to look at the awe-inspiring and terrifying sight.

Harry snapped out of his distraction and jumped into action, and shouted instructions to the soldiers, easily heard over the deathly silence which had blanketed the crowd.

“Moody, Kingsley, Tonks, you three cover us while we ward off the dementors. Thane, Remus, Ron, Hermione and Ginny your with me. The rest of you take out the death eaters.” He cried.

“Are you sure you couldn’t do with some help with the dementors boss?” Came a voice from behind Harry.

“Blaise, about time. Where’ve you been.” Harry asked his sergeant.

“Well I couldn’t exactly show my face to the death eaters could I?” Blaise responded, “I had to get little miss know it all here, to perform an illusion charm on me.” he motioned to Hermione, who looked mildly offended but was cut off from making any kind of retort by Harry.

“Fine, on my count, we all fire patronuses, you lot are the only ones, in the DA at least, that I know have truly mastered it.”

The dementors glided ever closer and Harry had to battle constantly against the darkness which threatened to consume him, fighting back his worst memories and concentrating on the moment Ginny accepted his proposal for a date. He wanted the dementors to all be grouped together before the patronuses were fired and so held back the urge to defend himself for the time being.

“One.” He said as the dementors reached within fifty yards of them. “Two.” They swooped ever closer, reaching thirty five yards by that point. “Three. Fire!” Twenty five yards and cries of “Expecto Patronum!” filled the air around him.

Creatures of all kinds sprung from the wands of the casters and charged at the dementors. Harry’s gigantic and brilliant white stag led the pack, slamming it’s great antlers into the creatures of darkness as it reached them. The forces of light and darkness did battle as the witches and wizards silently directed their patronuses against the dementors and they rampaged against them, driving them back and away from the crowd of people.

After a full five minutes of battle, Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Thane, Remus and Blaise relaxed and their patronuses faded away as the

dementors were driven back, fleeing from the gleaming, ethereal animals, spawned from happiness and hope. Their relief was once more destined only to be short lived, however as at that moment, they heard a cry of pain.

Harry's eyes automatically snapped to find the source of the noise and paused in shock at the sight which greeted him. Albus Dumbledore lay on the floor at the feet of the dark lord, just as Harry had only moment before. Disarmed, he lay helpless as Voldemort pointed his wand between his eyes. Recovering from his shock, Harry directed his wand at his mortal enemy and screamed; "Suffuco!"

Voldemort apparated away as he sensed the suffocation spell come screaming towards him. He reappeared mere feet away from Harry. Rather than engaging him in combat, however, he grabbed Ginny, who was the person nearest to him and apparated again so he was a little further away, but directly in front of Harry.

Harry pointed his wand at the dark lord, pure loathing and fury crashing over him as he saw him hold his wand to Ginny's temple, using her as a human shield.

"Let her go Tom. NOW!" Harry's command made those around him shiver as they heard and sensed the danger and power coming from the young wizard.

"I don't think so Potter." Voldemort calmly replied, "You will order your little children to step down and relinquish themselves into my captivity, otherwise I will kill the girl."

"Let me rephrase what I said" Harry spoke again, "Let Ginny go or I will kill you, while you have your wand pointed uselessly at her and not me."

"I could easily kill the girl and raise a shield in time to block any spell you could fire at me." Voldemort smirked, but Harry could sense the fear in him.

"Yes, I agree those are pretty good odds, but what about the stakes?" Harry asked, "You would bet the life of Lord Voldemort, heir of

Salazar Slytherin against the life of a blood traitor , what kind of gambler are you? Don't try and play games with me Riddle, I know how much you fear death. Now I'm going to ask you nicely one more time; you have to the count of three to release Ginny or your cold, lifeless body will hit the ground before any shield of yours has started to form. One...Two-

Voldemort relaxed his wand and directed it away from Ginny in an apparent act of submission. At that moment, however, he stiffened his arm again and, pointing his wand at a group of order members to his side cried; "Confringo Maxima!"

The ground itself where Voldemort had pointed his wand, glowed red momentarily, before exploding in a ball of fire, before anyone could offer any form of defence. Bodies were catapulted into the air and blood showered the ground where almost a dozen living people had stood mere seconds before. Harry turned his wand on Voldemort, but with one last smirk at his enemy, the dark lord silently disappeared from the scene and didn't return.

The death eaters, vastly outnumbered and with their master gone, also fled the battlefield and it seemed that as one they breathed a huge, collective sigh of relief as they realised that for now at least, it was over. While others rushed around, tending to the wounded and sending them to St. Mungos or else starting to piece the battered Hogsmeade back together, Harry just stood still, deep in thought.

"They knew we were here." Harry muttered to himself for the second time. Remus and Thane had, by now, healed Dumbledore, needing only a pepper up potion and a few waves of their wands and looked up at Harry's statement.

"What do you mean Harry?" it was Ginny who spoke from next to him, "They saw us when we helped that little boy out remember?"

"No, they knew we were here before then, they were searching for us."

"But no one even knew we would be here ." Ginny replied.

A look of dawning realisation appeared on Harry's face and suddenly he started marching off towards the outskirts of the village.

"Where are you going?" Remus asked his retreating back as they followed him away from the crowd.

"Headquarters" Came Harry's reply.

On reaching the edge of the village, Harry felt a slight shift in the air and knew that he had reached the edge of the anti-apparation jinx. Turning, he found, his friends, guardians and headmaster all stood behind him, looking at him strangely. Not prepared to answer any questions and with a look of determination on his face, Harry Potter, turned on his heel and disappeared. Appearing just outside number twelve Grimmauld place, Harry steeled himself, as he knew that he would be forced to enter for the first time since Sirius' death.

Trying the handle, Harry felt the door to be locked, despite the fact, Harry knew that only people who had been told the secret could enter. None of his unlocking charms would work, so, fuelled by the anger and determination which coursed through him, he slashed his wand down and cried "Reducto!" The door exploded inwards with a huge CRASH! Harry, climbed through what remained of the doorway and marched inside, vaguely aware of several small pops behind him.

Making his way into the living room, he blew the door open to find the source and target of his anger and loathing. Severus Snape jumped to his feet as he heard the door crash open, but had no time to react as he was struck by a red beam of light. The expelliarmus spell, which struck him in the chest, flung the shocked professor into the far wall, which he hit painfully and crumpled to the floor, his wand flying towards Harry who effortlessly reached up and caught it.

As soon as Snape hit the floor, however, he was picked back up again as Harry dragged him up roughly by his collar and to his feet before slamming him against the wall. There could be no doubting the loathing and the danger in Harry's eyes as, his face mere inches from Snape's he shouted; "You sent them after us didn't you, you bastard!? You listened in on my conversation with Ginny and you sent your master and his death eater scum to kill us and anyone who

got in the way didn't you? ANSWER ME!" Terror flashed momentarily in Snape's eyes, but as soon as Harry could have sworn it was there, it was gone. Years in the servitude of Lord Voldemort had taught Snape how to hide his fear.

"I don't know what your talking about Potter." He sneered in reply.

"Fine, have it your way." Harry said, his voice now calm and even, but in no way less threatening. With a wave of his wand Harry then placed his professor in a full body-bind and extracted a small vial of clear liquid from the inside pocket of his robes.

"Harry no! Don't do this, it is illegal and immoral." Turning around, Harry realised that everyone who was around him on the battlefield had followed him back to order headquarters and it was Dumbledore who had spoken.

"I'm sure that if Snape has nothing to hide, he will have no objection to a little veritaserum professor," came Harry's response.

Dumbledore started forward towards the scene, but Harry who had anticipated this move waved his wand in the air between his headmaster and himself. Dumbledore felt himself pushed back away from Harry and Snape and found that he couldn't move forward any further, blocked by an invisible shield.

"Harry, release the shield now or I will do it myself and you will be facing serious disciplinary action." Everyone could sense Dumbledore's growing anger and frustration but Harry answered calmly as he turned back to face Snape, "I don't think so professor. Disable it if you wish, because by the time you do I will have my answers."

Forcing Snape's jaw open, Harry poured four drops of veritaserum down his teacher's throat and began to speak as Dumbledore began working on bringing down Harry's shield.

"Did you know of Voldemort's attack on Hogsmeade?" he asked.

Snape's answer was completely emotionless as the truth serum took effect, "Yes."

"And how long have you known?"

"I was involved in the planning of the attack. It was first conceived months ago but was originally planned for the first Hogsmeade weekend of the new term."

"And why did Voldemort bring it forward?" Harry knew that he was getting close to what he wanted to hear.

"It was brought to his attention that Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley would be in Hogsmeade today."

"And who brought this to his attention?" Harry knew that this was it.

"I did."

Albus Dumbledore looked up in shock at his employee and spy's confession. Harry's eyes met his for a second and Harry could tell that the headmaster was truly shocked and devastated by this revelation, a second later, however, he turned back to continue his interrogation.

"There are wards on Remus' house, even though, as a member of the order, you could get in there are spells on the doors to prevent eaves dropping. How did you listen in on our conversation?"

"I knew that Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley were in the house alone. To get around the wards I simply magicked a miniscule hole in the wall and amplified the sound."

Harry looked back to the gathering behind him to find them looking stunned, both at Snape's betrayal (well Dumbledore was stunned at that bit) and the ease of how their wards were bypassed. Harry faced Snape once more for his final question.

“Who are you loyal to?” There was a slight pause and Harry knew that Snape was using his occlumency abilities to try and fight the potion but after a few seconds he answered;

“Lord Voldemort.”

Hearing these words, confirmation of his professor’s betrayal and knowing that it had cost good witches and wizards their lives sent Harry into a rage once more. He threw his teacher to the floor and directed his wand at him, fully intending to teach him a lesson.

“Harry no!” This time it was Ginny who had spoken and her words made him stop in a way no one else’s could. She walked forward towards him and clasped his arm, instantly calming his temper. “The Dementors can have him. He’s not worth your time or effort”

Harry nodded. “Your right.” With that he waved his wand over Snape, conjuring ropes to bind him before turning to the adults; “You better get him out of here and to Azkaban before I change my mind bout what I’m going to do with him”, he said before walking out off the living room and upstairs.

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“Reports say that he held his own against you know who for over five minutes professor. And as you know, five minutes against you know who is a long time. Even for you.” Tonks spoke up, giving her report as one of the aurors on duty at the time of the attack.

It was ten minutes later and an emergency meeting of the order was underway. When Harry had left, Dumbledore had taken Snape to Azkaban himself, sending Thane, as an auror, to give the news of his betrayal to the ministry. He had then called all of the members in for an emergency meeting to discuss what had happened.

“Yes, it seems Mr. Potter has more power and ability than even I realised.” Dumbledore replied, “His duel with Thane was impressive enough but this is unbelievable. Remus, Thane has he been training over the holidays, do you know?”

The two friends looked at each other, thinking about what to tell Dumbledore, before finally deciding that in this case the truth couldn't hurt.

"We've been working with him on the apparation shield, which incidentally he mastered quicker than any of us could have dreamed of, before moving on to other advanced spells and curses. But to be honest with you Albus, he taught me about as much as I taught him, though his knowledge of spells is obviously less than Voldemort's, his natural duelling ability is flawless." Came Thane's reply.

"And the Hogsmeade residents are claiming that the student group known as the DA just apparated to the scene and Harry's aid?"

"That's what they're telling us, yes. Although they didn't know it was Harry at first, reports suggest that both he and Ginny were under illusion charms. They spoke of a stranger coming from inside the three broomsticks to a child's aid, followed by a girl. This attracted the attention of the death eaters a few of whom engaged Harry in combat. The DA came about five minutes later, after he had dispatched of about a dozen wizards himself." It was Kingsley who spoke this time.

Meanwhile, upstairs Harry was talking to Ginny, Ron and Hermione who had joined him in Sirius' room.

"Just before You know who fled, he exploded the ground at the feet of about ten order members feet. What are the chances of surviving something like that? None of them even saw it coming." Ron asked and it seemed that they all turned to Harry for the answer.

"I'm afraid very little." Harry responded, "And that was after a whole battle, there are bound to be some casualties. Stay here, I'll go and talk to the order, we deserve to know who made it back and who didn't."

With those words, Harry made his way out of the bedroom and into the landing. He was just about to go downstairs when he heard a voice calling out behind him.

“Harry wait.” It was Ginny and as Harry turned around she jogged up to him and threw her arms around him in a hug. Pulling back slightly she said; “I never really thanked you. You saved my life. It’s becoming quite a habit of yours.”

It was at that moment that Harry realised that they were in each others arms, their faces inches apart as Ginny smiled at him. Knowing that the time was right, Harry moved his face forwards, closing the gap between them. He closed his eyes as Ginny’s lips brushed gently against his and they kissed. Eventually and reluctantly, they broke apart and, forgetting about everything that had happened earlier that day they smiled at each other and without saying another word, turned and walked off their separate ways.

Downstairs the order meeting was still taking place and, upon reaching the kitchen, Harry found the door to be under several powerful locking and protection charms. He could just knock, but that wouldn’t be nearly dramatic enough so, still elated over what had happened just minutes ago, Harry decided to go for the big entrance. “I suppose the big question is what was Harry doing there in the first place?”

“I don’t think that’s really any of your business professor.” Harry stood leaning against the far wall of the kitchen, having seemingly appeared out of nowhere.

“How did you get in here?” Dumbledore asked looking shocked.

“A weakness in your defences headmaster. The door is heavily protected, but the walls themselves aren’t protected at all, it all it took was a simple ‘evanesco’ on the wall to let myself in.”

“I think we would have noticed if an entire wall disappeared Harry.” Thane replied from his place to Dumbledore’s left.

“I just used a ‘Disillusion charm’ on myself and an illusion charm on the place where the wall used to be. But we’re getting off topic, I came down here to ask about the casualties, how many are seriously injured and”, he forced himself to say it, “how many didn’t make it back.”

Dumbledore seemed to be considering whether or not to answer when Remus spoke up.

“They suffered heavy losses. I don’t know how many were injured but I know for a fact that fourteen of them were killed because the aurors swept them up off the street just after you left. Most of them, were junior death eaters who hadn’t been trained for battle, but we got a few of the big names. Macnair and Zabini were found in a group of ten, four of whom were dead and the others seriously injured. In addition to those killed and seriously injured, we captured ten of them including Lucius Malfoy. Your handiwork I presume?”

“Yes, Malfoy was a bit tricky. But I know what your doing Remus. What about our side?” Harry replied.

“We lost nine and about twice as many are seriously injured.” It was Moody who had spoken this time.

“Who?” Harry managed to choke out.

“You don’t know most of them.” Remus responded, “But of those you do know, Filius Flitwick, Elphias Doge and of your DA Terry Boot all perished in battle today.”

Harry just nodded, trying to take it all in. He was filled with horror and remorse as he realised that he had led a sixteen year old boy to his death.

“And you said a Zabini was killed?” He managed to ask.

“Yes, Caspian Zabini. He was in Voldemort’s inner circle, Uncle of Blaise, who’s in your year I believe. Why do you ask?”

“No reason.” Harry replied, “Thanks for the information. If you need me I’ll be upstairs.”

With that he turned to leave, but froze as Dumbledore said his name.

“Harry. You did very well in battling Lord Voldemort and his death eaters. I would love to know how you managed to do it and, indeed, what it was you were doing there in the first place.”

Harry was about to respond when he felt a force pushing against his mental defences, trying to invade his mind. Harry, looked Dumbledore straight in the eyes and realised what was happening. With an almighty push he threw the alien presence from his mind and he saw Dumbledore recoil in his seat.

“Thank you for your praise headmaster”, Harry began, his voice now ice cold, “and thank you for your prompt arrival at the battlefield you, Remus and Thane may well have saved my life. If you don’t mind though, I would like to give you a bit of advice. Stop pushing your allies away. You are a good wizard, but your need to know everything and be in control makes you make stupid choices. I don’t think I need to remind you that the use of leglimency on a minor is punishable by up to three years in Azkaban.”

Harry just had time to see the rest of the order looked shocked and turn questioningly towards Dumbledore before he walked out of the room and back up the stairs to his friends.

The next day was the day of their return to Hogwarts. This meant that, as always, the morning was spent in a rush to pack everything they hadn’t packed the previous night and find all of their socks and books which had mysteriously gone missing in the course of the holiday. Harry had just located his DADA book when Molly Weasley burst into the room.

“Come on Harry dear, or you’ll miss the train.” She said as she shepherded him out of the door.

Harry, Ron, Hermione and Ginny ran through the wall dividing platforms nine and ten at five minutes to one and immediately jumped on the train which was due to leave at any minute. Relieved they had made it they quickly found a compartment and the four of them leaned out of the window and waved to their parents (and in Harry’s case Remus) as the train started to move away. Their waving families

soon disappeared out of view as the train rounded a corner and the four friends sat down on their seats.

It wasn't long into the journey when they were joined by Neville and the five of them just sat talking as the train whisked through the countryside and Northwards up to the mountains of Scotland. Though they avoided it like the plague, the conversation inevitably turned to the war in the end and the battle they had just fought.

"It really hammered home that there just aren't enough of us." Harry began, "Even though the order and the DA appeared in full force, it was a close battle. What we fought was only a small section of Voldemort's army and, when the order arrived, we far outnumbered them. But it was the arrival of the Dementors which really hurt us. It meant that some of our most powerful troops had to defend the others against them and yet more powerful fighters had to watch our backs while we did it."

"But we have recruited everybody who wants anything to do with us at Hogwarts. You know as well as anyone that we have searched the grounds and used legilimency and brought together anyone who is brave enough to fight. What else can we do?" Ginny responded.

"The problem, we've established, was magical creatures and I think therein lies the solution." Harry replied, speaking of a plan that had been forming in his mind for sometime. "There are thousands of magical creatures in the forbidden forest, there are rumours of dragons in the mountains surrounding Hogwarts and there are house elves in the kitchens. There are masses of untapped magical power all around us and if we can persuade just some of these creatures to fight with us then it will give our forces a huge boost."

There seemed to be general approval of this statement as they all nodded at Harry's plan, then Hermione spoke up.

"I agree that we should try and recruit magical creatures Harry, but..." Harry knew that Hermione disagreed with something he had said and suspected he knew what it was. She still hadn't given up on SPEW but, Harry noticed, she was being very tactful around him, not wanting to ruin their friendship again. "...in regards to the house elves,

we can't ask them to fight. They all see us as their masters and they'll do anything we ask of them, it's not right to force creatures to fight."

Hermione looked worried as Harry said nothing for a while. In reality, however, he knew that Hermione spoke the truth and had brought up something he hadn't thought of. Then an idea struck him. "You're right Hermione," She looked immensely relieved, "we can't ask them to fight. But I know someone who can. Dobby."

Everyone in the carriage, apart from Harry and Ginny, jumped as, with a pop, a small elf appeared in the middle of the carriage.

"Yes Harry Potter sir?" Dobby asked, standing up straight and saluting. Harry had to stifle a laugh. Just when he had managed to get Dobby to stop calling him 'Master Harry Potter', Dobby had started to salute him. Harry had tried to get him to stop but Dobby had been adamant that, as Harry was his commander in the army, he should be saluted.

"I have a new task for you Dobby, if you're willing to accept it." Harry began.

"Oh yes Harry Potter sir. Dobby will do whatever he is asked." Came the enthusiastic reply.

"Hold on Dobby, I haven't told you what it is yet." Harry said, "I want you to try and recruit some more house elves to the cause. Now I can't do it because they will treat it as an order and will fight whether they want to or not. If you ask, however, they will not feel obliged, but some just might want to fight anyway."

"Harry Potter sir is a great wizard to take the feelings of house elves into account. Dobby will do the task sir, he will recruit as many elves as he can and he shall do it right away."

With that and a quick salute, Dobby disappeared with another pop.

"Think Dobby can persuade the elves to join us?" Ron asked after a short surprised silence.

“I don’t know. But even if he can get just a few on side, it will be a huge advantage, the elves know Hogwarts very well and have their own type of powerful magic.”

Looking out of the window, Neville spoke for the first time since the conversation had turned to the war; “We should get changed, Hogwarts will be coming into view any second.”

Harry joined Neville in staring out of the window. As they rounded a corner, the high turrets and battle gates of Hogwarts came into view. The magical fortress was an awe inspiring sight as magic and mystery seemed to emanate from its walls. It was silhouetted beautifully against the sky as the sun started to set and a warm feeling flooded over Harry as he realised that he was home.

“Concentrate on the action figure. Imagine it as an extension of yourself and your magic and just force it to move in accordance with your will.”

Dumbledore had temporarily taken over Professor Flitwick’s position as charms teacher and Harry had to begrudgingly admit, he turned out to be a very good teacher. It seemed that none of the staff felt the inclination to find a replacement for their friend, it would be an insult to his memory to do so, so quickly.

The first few weeks back at school were spent in mourning for their fallen teacher and classmate. Harry had seen Terry Boot’s parents entering Hogwarts on the first day back at school and watched, frozen to the spot with grief threatening to overwhelm him as they disappeared up to Dumbledore’s office. They had reappeared an hour or so later, shaking and their faces streaked with tears as they held each other and walked out of Hogwarts with but one last, agonising look back to the castle that their son had called home. Harry had felt that he should go over to them and explain why he had led their son to his death and how sorry he was but his legs simply wouldn’t obey him. And in his heart he knew that mere words would hold no comfort for them, not yet at least, not while the grief and feeling of overwhelming loss was still raw in their souls.

Charms had been suspended and a morbid, dour air blanketed the halls of Hogwarts, encompassing everyone it fell upon, except, of course, the Slytherins. After the first three weeks, however, it was decided that the students could not miss out on charms anymore and, because of the situation outside the protective walls of Hogwarts and with the death of their colleague so recent and untimely, Dumbledore decided that he should take on the duty himself. And to his credit, he had really sped up the teaching of this vital subject and was working the students as hard as he could to get them prepared for the war which would inevitably come to them.

Harry too had been working his troops harder than ever before, the battle at Hogsmeade and the loss of Terry Boot showing him that, despite all of their training, they weren’t yet ready for full combat. Hermione had started to come to the DA lessons once more and was training like a woman possessed to ensure what happened in the

battle would never happen again. She would not be the person who needed to be rescued. Things were starting to get back to normal for the trio of friends, and though Hermione was still noticeably cautious about what she said so as not to upset Harry, he was happy to have his friends back by his side.

It was just before the first DA session since they had returned from the holidays when Harry heard the door open behind him as he was setting up the room of requirements. Turning at the sound, he saw Blaise Zabini standing just inside the door and looking a little out of place, his confidence and arrogance of last term having seemingly evaporated into thin air.

"Hi Blaise, what's up?" Harry asked, sensing that he already knew the answer.

Blaise hesitated before walking further into the room and sitting down on an archair which popped into existence to accommodate him.

"It's about my Uncle sir." he replied.

"I'm sorry Blaise, I-"

"I'm not blaming you Harry," Blaise interrupted and using Harry's first name for the first time he could remember, "The locals told me you killed him. But they also told me that you were surrounded, that you had no other choice but to blow a hole in the scum who were trying to hurt you. My uncle deserved to die. What I came to tell you is...that I'm resigning from the DA."

Harry was momentarily taken aback, but gathered himself, "You don't have to do that."

"Yes I do. Now that my uncle is dead I have no means of acquiring death eater information, the Slytherins don't like or trust me enough to give me anything, I'm just a normal student."

"You're right. Which is why I'm going to revoke your pay and your duties as a spy." Harry replied and Blaise's head dropped, "However, you will retain your rank of sergeant and you will continue coming to

training and you will keep on helping me in the war effort. Blaise, obviously I wish you could continue getting me information, but I do have other spies and I still need as many soldiers as I can get, especially those who have shown the skill and bravery that you have. So no, I don't accept your resignation, now come here and help me set up the room, the rest of the troops should be arriving any minute and you've distracted me."

Blaise looked stunned, but after a moment he stood up and started to help, just as the door opened a second time to reveal Ginny, Ron and Hermione.

"Harry perhaps you would like to demonstrate." Harry was snapped back to reality by Dumbledore's request.

"O.K sir," came the reply.

"You really just waved your hand, said the incantation of the arrow-wand charm and made the doll do a striptease in front of Dumbledore and the whole class?" Ginny asked incredulously, trying to keep the smile from her face. It was now lunch and Hermione had just told Ginny about what Harry interpreted as 'demonstrate animating an action figure.

"Well he did ask me to demonstrate and he said it as if I wasn't listening." Harry replied.

"Well you weren't." Hermione pointed out.

"I know but still."

"Wait, can we get back to the matter in hand?" Ginny said exasperatedly, "Bloody hell Harry, I thought you were meant to be hiding the extent of your new powers. What are you going to do next, change into your animagus form and fly around in front of McGonagall?"

"What!!?" Hermione exclaimed, "You're an animagus?"

“Do you mind if we talk about this later?” Harry said, glancing around him, “You know, when we’re not surrounded by hundreds of people including Voldemort sympathisers while talking about one of my best and most secret weapons.”

“Sorry.” Hermione replied looking slightly embarrassed.

“And besides Ginny, Voldemort already knows about my wandless magic and my ability to cast one spell while saying the incantation to another. I used it in our duel.” Harry continued, “Well I would love to sit here and talk to you guys about top secret issues of war but I have potions and you know what Grubbly-Plank’s like, she’s almost as bad as Snape.”

After a surprisingly good and educational potions lesson on basic healing potions, Harry made his way with Hermione back to the Gryffindor common room. Making eye contact with Ron and Ginny, Hermione then grabbed Harry’s arm and led him up the stairs and into the sixth year dormitory.

“So, an animagus Harry? Do you know how dangerous that is, how illegal it is?”

Hermione started and Harry could sense a full blown lecture on its way.

“Hermione wait, before you go into rant mode, just let me explain.” Hermione folded her arms and sat down on the bed, waiting impatiently. “Yes, I do know how dangerous it was and yes I do know how illegal it was but I also know how useful it is to have a secret method of attack and evasion and, with my form especially, I’m pretty good at both of them.”

“Why what are you?” Hermione asked, her interest piqued.

Harry just smile at her and closed his eyes Suddenly and thanks to months of practice, he started to change, his body lengthened, his head changed shape, fur sprouted all over his body and he felt his limbs become shorter and more powerful. Seeing the shock on Hermione and Ron’s faces, Harry opened his mouth and let out an almighty ROAR! Ron, Ginny and Hermione all jumped back at the

sound and Harry smiled, well as much as a lion can smile. He then spread his wings and, flapping them up and down, took off, flying a lap around the dormitory before coming into land and changing back to his human form. Upon landing, Harry saw Hermione, especially, looking at him in utter shock and something which looked like awe.

“What is it?” Harry asked confused.

“Harry you’re a Gryon!”

“I’m a what?”

“A Gryon; a cross-breed between a Gryffin and a lion, its supposed to be just a legend I didn’t know that one actually existed, never mind that anyone would have it as an animagus form.”

“Hermione, we’re living in a world where dragons, unicorns, vampires, werewolves and centaurs wander around the forests near wizards and witches, I wouldn’t set much store by myths and legends if I were you.” Harry replied.

“Even witches and wizards have legends Harry. This one surrounds Godric Gryffindor. History tells us that Gryffindor was a Griffin animagus, hence the name, and the only known wizard who has ever had a magical second form I might add. We also know that he married a warrior witch by the name of Gwendolyn Ravenclaw, Rowena’s sister and a very powerful witch. But this is when we delve into the realms of legend. Legend states that Gwendolyn herself followed in her husband’s footsteps and became an animagus; a lion. One afternoon, during the great war, after Salazaar Slytherin had turned to the dark, Gwendolyn was kidnapped and Godric, being the fighter he was, naturally went to save her, deep into the enemy lair. He sounds just like you Harry.” Hermione began her tale, smirking at this last comment as Harry and Ginny shared a discrete look at each other, making significant eye contact. “Anyway, Gryffindor battled hard and managed to defeat Lord Slytherin, but eventually succumbed to the injuries he sustained in the battle and died before he could rescue his love. Just when it looked hopeless and that Slytherin’s minions would finish Gwendolyn Gryffindor off for good, a Gryon swooped down and fought back the dozens of witches and

wizards before flying her to safety and Gwendolyn lived to take care of her young son and ensure the continuation of the noble Gryffindor dynasty. Like I said, I thought it was just a sort of fable. One of those stories you tell young children, the message is clear enough, love's victory over evil, the amalgamation of their forms which rescued her even though her love had died. Kind of like your parents Harry and the blood protection afforded to you via your aunt."

"I guess it runs in the family." Harry muttered, his head reeling from what he had just been told.

"What?" Ron asked, speaking for the first time since they had entered the room.

"What?" Harry replied, confused.

"You said 'I guess it runs in the family.'"

Harry looked at Ron and Hermione's expectant faces and knew that he couldn't keep his secret anymore, but at the same time knowing that couldn't go through the whole story, not after everything he had just been told; it was too much.

"You can tell them Ginny," he said, "they deserve to know everything, they've more than proved their loyalty. I'm going for a walk."

With these final words, Harry walked out of the dormitory and then out of the common room, into the silent halls of Hogwarts. The sun was just starting to set outside and Harry needed to clear his head, so he headed down the numerous staircases that separated him from the entrance hall and then out of the door and into the Hogwarts grounds. Seeing Hagrid's hut, Harry realised that he hadn't seen his friend for a long time, but also knew that this wasn't the right time, he just wanted to be alone. Settling himself down by a tree on the banks of the lake, Harry closed his eyes.

It seemed to him that everything he did and everything he was had a wider significance in the wizarding world, he didn't know exactly how he felt about being such a rare creature. Though he was glad to know of the creature's power, it was just another thing that made him

different and if anyone found out, and they were bound to eventually, it would just make him more famous, the confirmation of an ancient legend. This was bound to make everyone even more in awe of him and, even though he knew that he was the one who had to kill Voldemort, he really didn't want to deal with people's expectations and hero-worship until he absolutely had to.

"Hi." A beautiful voice said from above him.

"How did they take it?" Harry asked, opening his eyes, as Ginny sat down next to him.

"Well Ron is in absolute awe and Hermione is talking about how she knew that the connection between you and Gryffindor had to be founded in inherited genetics. So, you know, pretty much what you would expect. What none of them think, however, is any differently of you. None of this changes our perception of you, Harry and it won't for any of your other true friends when they find out."

"I know." Harry replied, "it's the other tens of thousands of wizards across the world who concern me, if this ever gets into the press I'll never here the end of it."

"Oh, so me calling up Rita Skeeter and telling her all of the details wasn't such a good idea then?"

"Very funny", Harry said, in a playfully sarcastic way, "What I mean, as you well know, is that eventually I will have to use my animagus form against Voldemort and there'll be no stopping anyone who happens to see it."

"This is all getting very serious isn't it?" Ginny said with a frown, "Harry, we'll deal without these problems as they come, let's talk about something else. Now, our first date, wasn't exactly how I pictured it, it started off well enough, but the death eaters and all the death and destruction put a bit of a damper on the afternoon. So what do you say? How about you and me three weeks this Saturday, it's the first Hogsmeade trip of the term and I haven't invited any murderous thugs along this time so it'll just be the two of us."

"Are you asking me out Miss Weasley?" Harry playfully replied.

“Perhaps.” Ginny said.

“Well I may need some convincing.”

“O.K.” Ginny replied and with that, Harry started to lean towards her. They were only inches apart when Harry felt himself pushed back away from Ginny. “But not right now.” She continued, smiling mischievously.

“Why not?” Harry asked.

“Well I’m fine with it if you think you can kiss me and get to the DADA classroom for your meeting with Thane in the...fifteen seconds you’ve got until they’re expecting you.”

“Damn it!” Harry exclaimed, as he looked at his watch and realised that Ginny spoke the truth.

Flicking his wrist, he summoned his bag through limbo and it appeared hanging in the air in front of him before he grabbed it and ran off in the direction of the castle. He got about twenty yards before he turned around, ran back towards Ginny and quickly kissed her on the lips.

“Bye.” He said as he pulled back.

“Bye.” She replied.

“Five minutes late Harry,” Thane said as Harry burst through the door, “and you have the audacity to turn up in drag.”

“What?” Harry asked confused, as he sat down across from Thane at his desk.

“You’ve got lipstick on your lips mate.” Thane replied, laughing as Harry hastily wiped his mouth. “Good job. A certain Miss Weasley I presume?”

“What can I tell you Thane? I know how to handle the ladies.” Harry jokingly replied with a smirk.

“So I’ve heard, Miss Chang certainly enjoyed your date, before you ran out on her to another woman.” Thane smiled, knowing that he had won the banter with that particular piece of information which he had picked up from Ron.

“O.K. you win this round.” Harry said after he had searched and failed to find an adequate retort. “So, why are we just sitting here talking, rather than training to fight the baddies?”

“Because we are expecting a visitor.” Thane replied, and then noticed that the fire in the classroom had turned green, “And here, with the convenience and timing you only get in a work of fiction, he is.”

“Remus!” Harry exclaimed as he saw his guardian walking towards them, beaming.

“How are you? And what are you doing here?”

“I’m well thank you Harry. And as for what I’m doing here, Thane invited me over for a training session, and I really enjoyed the ones we did over Christmas so I decided to take him up on his offer.”

“Well it’s good to see you Remus. I-Thane what did you mean by ‘convenience and timing you only get in a work of fiction’?”

“What? Oh nothing,” Thane replied, his eyes glancing from side to side suspiciously.

“Oh O.K. so where shall we begin?”

The three of them spent the next hour learning and practicing firing multiple spells, both at once and one after another like machine gun fire as Voldemort used against Harry in their duel. Along with touching on pure light spells, though these proved extremely difficult, even for Harry but he noticed Thane and Remus sharing significant glances and smiles as he finally managed to pull off a highly

advanced pure light spell that none of the others came close to mastering.

"Thanks a lot you two, I'll see you tomorrow Thane. And Remus, are you coming next week?" Harry said at the end of the lesson.

"Yeah sure, if I can make it I'll be here."

Harry walked out of the classroom at around eight O'clock and, after checking that there was no one around him spoke; "You can reveal yourself Dobby, there's no one here."

With permission granted, the little house elf materialised at Harry's side. "I have news for you Harry Potter sir." He squeaked, "Would you like me to tell you here or somewhere more secure."

"If it's sensitive information we better go to the room of requirements." Harry replied.

Nothing further was said between the two of them until they reached the seventh floor and the heart of Harry's war effort; the room of requirements. Conjuring a table, a couple of chairs and some drinks, Harry sat down and offered a chair for Dobby to do the same.

"So how have you been Dobby, I haven't heard from you for a while? I'm sorry I haven't been down to visit but I've been pretty busy." Harry stated.

"Dobby has been very well thank you Harry Potter sir. He too has been busy, there has been no news to bring from Dumbledore's order, but Dobby has been trying to convince the elves to help in Harry Potter's war effort."

Harry couldn't help but lean forward at these words, aware that what Dobby said next could have a massive impact on the defence of Hogwarts if nothing else.

"Did any of them agree Dobby?"

“Yes Harry Potter sir. Dobby was able to convince all but about ten of the elves to follow under your lead in protecting Hogwarts. They feel that they are duty bound to protect the castle and its occupants, the ones who won’t fight made that decision because they feel more loyalty to the headmaster than the school and its students and they have a problem with keeping their service to you a secret from the headmaster. But Dobby has persuaded them not to tell anyone and Harry Potter has himself fifty new elves to protect the school who are waiting for your orders.”

“You’ve done a great job Dobby. Thanks for the information and I’d really appreciate it if you continued to keep looking for information in the order. Don’t worry too much if its not forthcoming though, it seems that the order’s supply of information is drying up, and with Blaise’s uncle dead, it looks like I’m going to have to get more intelligence out of Wormtail, I’m expecting a report from him in a few days. You may get back to your duties now Dobby, I know your busy. Thanks again for the information.” Noting his dismissal, Dobby stood and, with a low bow, disappeared from sight, undoubtedly to reappear in the kitchens down below.

Harry was about to return to the common room, but paused at the bottom of the stairs leading up to Gryffindor tower. After everything that had happened today, he really didn’t feel like going back to the tower and acting like a normal student, something, it was becoming increasingly apparent, he would never be. Knowing that he couldn’t face his friends, normality and certainly not sleep tonight, Harry turned on his heel and with a muttered spell and a flick of his wrist, conjured his invisibility cloak and headed in the direction of the library.

Silently creeping into the library, Harry immediately walked through the main library and made his way to the murkier depths of the forbidden section. Browsing along the shelves, he came across all manner of books concerning the dark arts and the most vile of spells and potions ever conceived; just what he needed. Eventually he found a promising looking book on pure dark spells and sat down to read. Though he knew (or at least hoped) he would never be able to perform these spells, it couldn’t hurt to know the theory and especially how to defend against them.

Harry read through the night, fighting off fatigue so he could power on and soak up as much of this vital information as he possibly could. What he had heard of pure dark spells was true, they would only affect light witches and wizards just as pure light spells only affected dark witches and wizards and could only be performed by wizards who are both powerful and have truly descended into pure evil. Pure dark spells could only be nullified and defended against by pure light spells, which, naturally, could only be performed by powerful wizards who are predominantly good, with a noble cause.

Harry knew that using bolts of pure light magic against Voldemort would have to be a last resort as, if he countered with his own bolt of pure dark magic they would end up in a *priori incantatem* like situation and this time Harry would not win. As he learned from the book, in this situation it is the caster who puts the most power into the spell who will force the power of both spells on to the other and no matter how hard he studied and who his ancestors were, Voldemort was still more powerful than him and was still growing in strength from the last dark ritual he performed.

The hoot of an owl jerked Harry out of the slumber he had fallen into late the night before and he saw that he had, yet again, fallen asleep in the library. It was three weeks later and the day before Harry's first (proper) date with Ginny and so he jumped up with more vigour than most thought possible in the early hours of the morning and, checking his watch, Harry saw that it was now 5:30 am and nearly time for his morning run. With this in mind, and wiping the sleep from his eyes, Harry scooped up his invisibility cloak, which had fallen off him in his sleep, and headed out of the library and up towards Gryffindor tower. As he had suspected, there was no one, apart from him, insane enough to be up at this hour and he was greeted, as he entered his dormitory, by the familiar and rather comforting sound of Ron's snoring. Changing into his running gear, Harry quietly slipped out of the dormitory and common room and walked outside into the grounds for his daily exercise.

When he returned from his run, Harry noticed that his roommates were starting to stir and, by the time he had showered and got dressed, they were beginning to drag themselves out of bed. Not wanting to wait, and knowing that Ron had a big mouth, especially

after being told important information, Harry met his best friends gaze with a look that clearly said 'we'll talk later' and headed downstairs to breakfast alone.

The first lesson of the day was defence against the dark arts and that was enough to put Harry in a considerably better mood than he was last night. Sitting down at his usual place at the Gryffindor table, it wasn't long until he was joined by Ginny, who sat down opposite him.

"Morning Ginny." Harry said brightly.

"Morning. You're in a good mood." Came the reply.

"And why shouldn't I be a good mood?" Harry asked, "With such a beautiful girlfriend."

"I don't remember saying that I would be your girlfriend," Ginny said smirking.

"Oh good." Harry replied, "So you won't mind that I agreed to go out with Cho Chang the day before our Hogsmeade date then?"

"You can be my guest." Ginny said, playing along. "Let's just hope that you can get through a whole date this time."

"Fine, Fine, you win."

"What does she win?" Ron asked as he plonked himself down next to Harry and immediately started buttering some toast.

"Nothing." Harry said pointedly, seeing that Ginny was about to wind her brother up.

The three of them were joined by Hermione shortly after that and the golden trio, after a quick breakfast, made their way down to Thane's room for DADA. Smiling at his friend and teacher as he went in, Harry took his usual seat at the front, with Ron and Hermione to his left and right, looking anywhere but at each other after their argument on the way to class over who invented the lawn. Under the circumstances, Harry was rather annoyed to be grouped with his two best friends as

they split into groups to practice the 'Langlock curse.' A curse which glued a victim's tongue to the roof of their mouth, rendering them speechless and, weaker enemies at least, powerless.

"So, heir of Gryffindor then mate? Not too shabby for a bloke raised by muggles." Ron said as they had established that all three of them had mastered the spell (Harry, in fact, had mastered it months ago).

"Ron, be more sensitive!" Hermione exclaimed "Harry probably doesn't want to talk about it."

"That's O.K. Hermione," Harry interjected after casting a silent 'muffliato' to make sure that no one could listen in on their conversation, "Ron just wouldn't be Ron if he was sensitive. And yes Ron, though I was shocked at first, I suppose I am glad to know more about my family, especially when one of my ancestors turns out to be one of the most powerful and noble wizards to ever live. It obviously runs in the family."

"Yeah you're probably right." Ron replied, "Do you think it's just the power and nobility or do you think you have inherited your great modesty too."

"No I think my amazing modesty was a gift given to me by God himself as he blessed me as his greatest creation." Harry returned, grinning at the banter he was enjoying with his best mate and realising just how much he had missed it in the months they had not spoken.

"But seriously Harry," Hermione said, "doesn't the pressure of all this expectation get to you? With the prophecy and people's expectations and now this, it would sure as hell get to me." Harry had told his friends of the prophecy not long after they had all made up again and though shocked at first, both confessed that they had always known, on some level at least, that the war would end up being decided between Voldemort and Harry.

"Truthfully? Yes it did at first and it sometimes still does, but there's nothing I can do about it but train as best I can, oh and occasionally

just feel sorry for myself and strop off on my own and read, which is what I did last night by the way.”

“You’re a bigger man then I am mate. I’ve never been brilliant at dealing with pressure.” Ron entered back into the conversation.

“Oh I don’t know mate, the pressure is on in two weeks time because I for one am counting on you bringing home the quidditch cup.”

“Don’t remind me.” Ron replied, “No one warned me that Katie was going to be as mental as Wood and Angelina put together. Four hours she had us training yesterday, in the freezing cold she’s completely lost it Harry.”

“It’s so nice to see such dedicated students in my class.” Came a voice from behind them. “That it assuming of course that I have partial amnesia and am in fact the quidditch teacher who has gone mad and started teaching in a defence classroom.”

“Sorry Thane, it’s just the fact that...quidditch is so much more important than everything else on this planet.” Harry replied.

“Well you do have a point there. So I suppose I’ll let you off the two hundred points of Gryffindor I was about to take away in a Severus Snape moment.”

“I know what you mean,” Ron said, becoming ever more comfortable in Thane’s company after seeing how he interacted with Harry. “I never realised how many points he took away until he was, let’s call it forced into retirement. We’re about a hundred points ahead.”

Thane was prevented from replying by the ringing of the bell to signal the end of class and the trio said their goodbyes and left as Thane dismissed them. At lunch, Harry, Ron and Hermione met up with Ginny and started to talk of Harry and Ginny’s upcoming date as they served themselves some food.

“So where are you going to be taking me?” Ginny asked, “I hear that Madam Pudifoot’s is very romantic.”

“Ginny, quite frankly I’d rather go around to Voldemort’s place for a double date with him and Nagini.” Harry replied, remembering with a shudder his date with Cho.

“Exactly,” Ron chipped in, “Harry will be taking you to a respectable, public place where kissing, touching or sitting too close to someone of the opposite sex is frowned upon, at least when that person of the opposite sex is my sister. You should go to Fred and George’s in Diagon Alley, they’ll probably give you some free stuff, and although they’ll be pleased at Ginny’s choice of boyfriend, they’ll castrate you if you stand too close.”

“I actually wouldn’t put that past them.” Harry said, frowning.

Even Voldemort would be loathe to cross the Weasley twins with something regarding their sister; they were even worse than Ron. Looking at his watch, Harry saw that he only had five minutes until they were supposed to be at Transfiguration and, after telling his two best friends, he had to smile at their contrasting reactions. A look of horror and fright spread over Hermione’s features when she realised that if they didn’t leave now she could be late. This was especially funny when compared to Ron’s reaction which was simply to glance at his watch interestedly before turning back to his dinner and continuing to eat. After Hermione had managed to physically drag Ron away from his food, the three of them walked out of the great hall together and then up the stairs towards Transfiguration.

As McGonagall started the lesson, Harry was faced with a problem that was becoming increasingly more common and more irritating; they were learning something that, not only had he mastered months ago, he had also mastered without a wand, silently, a combination of the two and to a much higher standard. This time they happened to be learning how to transfigure base metals such as iron and copper into wood or other non-metallic substances.

Feeling bored by the basic theory, Harry waved his hand over the small lump of iron in front of him and concentrated hard on heating it. After a few seconds, the iron started to melt before his eyes and, taking advantage of the molten state, Harry magically moulded the metal in to the shape of a monkey. He burst out laughing when he

received an icy glare from Hermione as he animated his little monkey and made it jump and swing from her hair.

“Harry how old are you exactly?” she asked sarcastically, “it’s just that you seem to be older than five but I don’t know many sixteen year olds who would find a toy monkey swinging around the classroom to be very funny.”

“Ha Ha, look at that monkey, it’s swinging on your hair Hermione.” Came Ron’s voice at that moment as he rolled around with laughter.

“Ron you’re not helping. Are you two honestly two of the most important figures in the fight against Voldemort? Because if you are I may just join the death eaters now.” Hermione replied.

“Monkeys are funny.” Ron commented intelligently.

“Just swing it over there Harry, I’m trying to get on with my work.”

“Fine, fine. No need to be childish about is Hermione. Hey Ron, I’m going to see if I can swing him on to Neville’s head.”

“Harry you are an absolute genius.” Ron responded.

Aiming his wand at his monkey, Harry made it jump from Hermione’s hair and on to his chair. There it started to swing on the chair back and, when it had enough momentum, Harry magically made the monkey release his grip and swing towards Neville’s head. Harry was never particularly good at geometry, however, and had gotten his angles wrong. Harry jr., as the monkey was now called, sailed right over Neville and towards McGonagall. Time seemed to slow as Harry jr. flew towards their teacher and Harry knew that he wouldn’t be able to stop him in time. Instead, he pointed his wand at his desk and conjured a new block of iron while wandlessly flinging Ron back into his chair.

“Who is responsible for this?” McGonagall snapped and Harry had to stifle a laugh at Harry jr. hanging comically from her bun of hair.

"I think it was Malfoy professor." Ron said, he was still yet to get his own back on Malfoy for trying to maim his sister in their duel before Christmas. He subtly looked across at Harry and winked. Harry immediately knew what he had in mind and, waving his wand behind his back, Malfoy's block of iron disappeared just as McGonagall came around to his desk.

"Tonight six O'clock, your first of a weeks worth of detentions in my office Mr. Malfoy. Class dismissed." Harry smiled to himself, that lesson couldn't have gone better and this had turned out to be a very good day.

The next day was the day of Harry's date with Ginny and 11:30 saw Harry stood in front of the mirror, examining himself critically.

"You'd think that with all of my new power, I would somehow be able to get my hair to lie flat."

"It's a known fact mate, the hair is the most magically resistant part of a wizard's anatomy." Ron replied from his bed where he was laid, enjoying Harry's nervousness.

"Really?" Harry asked, turning to face his best friend.

"No not really," Ron said incredulously, "You're an idiot."

"Well do you think Ginny would like it if I played the messiness up like my Dad used to?"

"Look Harry, I'm pleased that, if it had to be anyone, Ginny chose to date you, but I really don't feel comfortable having this conversation. To be honest I'd prefer it if you looked as bad as you possibly could."

"Nice to have your support mate but as much as I'm enjoying our chat, I'm going to have to go, I'm meeting your sister for our date. Are you going into Hogsmeade?"

"Yeah I'm going in with Hermione, Neville and Luna, do you want to meet up with us a bit later? How about around six?"

“No that’s OK, by that time we’ll probably be back at the dormitory. And it could be a bit awkward what with you being her brother and with all the nakedness.”

Harry ran out the dormitory as a barrage of spells flew at him from Ron’s wand. Laughing to himself, Harry made his way downstairs and to the entrance hall where he was meeting up with Ginny who appeared moments later. Grabbing each others hand, the two of them then walked out of the castle and across to Hogsmeade.

“So where shall we go?” Harry asked as they reached the edge of Hogwarts’ grounds.

“It’s pretty cold, how about we have a drink at the three broomsticks before getting something to eat.”

“Fine with me.”

The two of them ordered their drinks and sat down in a private booth, this was followed by a brief lull in the conversation.

“If there is a bang and a scream I’m going to be seriously annoyed.” Harry remarked, getting a feeling of déjà vu. There was a brief silence which followed this, while both Ginny and Harry listened expectantly.

“No I think we’re OK.” Ginny replied, giggling, “It does seem like there’s something conspiring to keep us apart doesn’t there?”

“No. Well apart from a spy, a powerful dark lord, a powerful dark army and a huge and deadly battle, but that’s pretty much the norm isn’t it?”

“Absolutely.” Ginny smiled, “At least for us. But let’s not dwell on that now I’m hungry, where do you want to go for lunch?”

“I know a place.” Harry replied conspiringly.

“Where?”

"It's a surprise. The place is quite a way into the village, so I'll apparate us there."

Harry said, while aiming his wand at Ginny under the table.

Silently and with not the slightest trace of effort and concentration appearing on the young wizard's face, a spell escaped from Harry's wand. Rather than striking her as a bolt of light, however, it simply settled on her leg and spread up her body making her glow even more than usual. Ginny, who now stood, looking expectantly at Harry and waiting to go, however, felt and noticed nothing and Harry took her hand and led her outside where he turned on his heel, catapulting the two of them through limbo and landing them softly on the street outside a small and cosy café.

"I don't recognise this part of town." Ginny stated, feeling slightly confused. She had, after all, been to the only magical town in the country hundreds of times while growing up.

"I told you it was a long way away, on the outskirts. Now come on, let's eat, I'm so hungry I may even give Ron a run for his money with this meal."

"Don't be silly Harry." Ginny replied, "When it comes to food, a Norwegian Ridgeback couldn't give Ron a run for his money."

"Can I help you?" Enquired the waitress as she approached their table.

"Yes, what would you recommend?" Harry asked.

"Well our specials today are Foie gras, Squab and pressed duck. Ze pressed duck is especially good."

"I'll have that then please." Harry replied.

"Do you have any shepherd's pie?" Ginny asked.

The waitress looked slightly confused and replied, "I am afraid not."

"Then I'll just have the same as Harry."

After eating their meals, which turned out to be incredibly tasty, Harry and Ginny vacated the restaurant and, hand in hand, walked around the town. It still felt incredibly unfamiliar to Ginny, but she accepted Harry's explanation and together they strolled for an hour, just talking, before Harry came to a stop.

"You know, I've never been to France before." He said.

"Neither have I." Ginny replied, looking at him as if he was slightly raving as he randomly switched the topic of conversation.

"Oh good, so how would you like to climb the Eiffel tower."

"When are we going to France exactly?"

"We don't have to go to France to climb the Eiffel tower Ginny." Harry said incredulously.

"Are you sure? Because I was very much under the impression that you do." Ginny replied.

"Of course I'm sure." Harry said, smiling at her mischievously, "We don't have to go to Paris, because we are already here."

With that, Ginny's jaw dropped to the floor as they rounded a corner, turning off the small back streets and into the open, revealing the Eiffel tower towering over the famous city of Paris. The capital city stretched out before them to make an amazing view and, Harry felt that he had timed his moment perfectly.

"Well?" Harry asked.

"Well what?" Ginny said, still staring open mouthed at the tower.

"Do you want to climb it?"

"Yes." Ginny managed to say, still dumbfounded to find herself in a foreign city, having been there for hours and not realising it.

“Everyone we have met or walked passed has spoken English.” she said, finally tearing her eyes from the tower to face Harry.

“No they haven’t.” He replied, “You’ve been hearing English, but they’ve been speaking French. Simple translation charm, although I have to admit that I was a bit worried when you asked for Shepherd’s pie.”

“Well what are we waiting for?” Ginny asked, now bouncing with excitement, “Let’s climb the tower.”

“This was a really great thing to do Harry.” It was now ten pm and the two of them were stood outside the Gryffindor common room, “Very romantic.”

They had spent the day visiting the tower and just walking around Paris, enjoying each others company as they saw the sights of Paris. Together, they went to the louvre and to the arc de triomphe and the Notre Dame de Paris.

“Well you didn’t seem to like the romantic battle I went for last time so I decided to go for something a bit different.”

A comfortable silence fell between them as they just stood and looked at each other. Looking into Ginny’s eyes, Harry hardly realised that the two of them were edging their faces closer to one another. Ginny closed her eyes, her lips parted slightly as she inched closer towards him. But as their lips were about to touch, the portrait of the fat lady swung open and a very uncomfortable looking Ron half fell, half jumped through the portrait hole, trying to look casual as he stood up from the floor and straightened his clothes.

“Hey guys.”

He said to his sister and best friend, who were stood, their arms around each other and their faces only inches apart as they looked at him, in surprise and annoyance. Harry was about to respond when, a hand cupped the side of his face and Ginny pulled his glance from Ron, back to her. She then immediately closed the gap between them, kissing Harry passionately, the latter gladly responding. Ron

momentarily looked as if he was considering going for his wand but seemed to decide against it and with a disgusted look on his face, turned around and walked back into the common room.

The next day was Sunday and that to the members of the Defence association, meant a meeting and training of the DA. Harry, as usual, went down early to prepare the room of requirements for the training session ahead. Today he was accompanied by Ginny, which meant that he was also accompanied by Ron, who seemed a little annoyed at Harry and unwilling to leave him alone with his sister in a room in which anything can be conjured. This, in turn, meant that Hermione also came along, unwilling to be left on her own and the four friends set up the room, conjuring the usual duelling platform and stage and expanding the room to create space for all the members.

As the hands of the clock came to rest on twelve and eleven, the door of the room opened and the soldiers of the defence association walked in, coming to a stand still in front of the stage and looking at Harry expectantly. Ginny, Ron and Hermione climbed down from the stage and Harry stepped forward to address his crowd.

“The fact that here at the meetings of the DA we are learning to defend ourselves against the dark arts does not mean that we are just learning defence against the dark arts.” Most of the crowd looked at Harry like he was a crazy person after his opening line, but Harry continued. “All aspects of magic can be used against someone in a combat situation. I could charm a death eater to levitate into the air and drop him from fifty feet in the air, I could conjure or transfigure myself a sword and throw at the death eater, but today we will be learning how to animate inanimate objects for use in battle. I know that sixth and seventh years will have done some of this in charms but this will be to a much higher level. Animating objects to fight can be incredibly useful as it means that you yourself don’t have to fight. You may even be able to sit behind a wall or under an invisibility cloak while you make a suit of armour do the fighting for you or, and this is much more likely, you may be able to animate that same suit of armour and while the death eater is distracted dealing with him, you can do what ever you like to take out the enemy. So without further adieu, let’s get to work.”

The DA made startling progress with the animation spell, knowing how important a lesson it was, and soon they were forcing their statues and suits of armour to do battle. After two hours, Harry was more than happy with their work for the day and, upon saying so dismissed his troops who exited the room of requirement with smiles on their faces. Hermione, Ron and Ginny stayed behind to help him clear up the room.

"That was a great lesson Harry," Hermione commented, as she vanished the debris of the broken statues which lay on the floor "You should really consider going into teaching as a profession."

"No I don't think that I could-"

Harry's reply was interrupted as, with a pop, a small, rat-like and disgusting excuse for a man appeared in the room, a few feet above the ground, which he promptly fell, landing on his stomach as gravity took effect. Harry was confused, he had given Wormtail an adapted port-key which would bring him to wherever Harry was, providing he was alone or in company he could trust, but they weren't due to meet until two days time. Walking over to his most loathed ally, Harry grabbed it by the arm and pulled it roughly to its feet.

"What are you doing her Wormtail?" He asked, glaring at the rat.

Wormtail cowered under Harry's powerful stare, before stuttering his response.

"I have information from the dark lord." He replied.

"What is it?" Harry asked eagerly, momentarily forgetting who he was talking to.

Pettigrew answered like a robot, or else like someone under the influence of Veritaserum, emotionlessly as the ancient magic of the life debt took effect.

"I have discovered the nature of the mysterious object. The dark lord bragged about it to his most faithful as he said he was close to retrieving it and at last ridding himself of the infernal nuisance of

Potter and Dumbledore and that with the object he would become all powerful, that the magical and muggle world would collide and crumble, leaving him as the earth's ruler and his faithful death eaters as..."

"Get on with it Wormtail." Harry interrupted.

"The object," He said, "it is..."

“...The Rock of Initium.”

Hermione gaped at this last statement, but Harry had expected something somewhat more meaningful. Ron and Ginny, for their part were just staring into space as if trying to recall a long forgotten memory.

“Doesn’t that have something to do with the founders of Hogwarts?” Ginny asked, “I seem to remember mum telling us a story about it when we were young.”

“It has everything to do with the founders Ginny.” Hermione began

“You may leave now Wormtail.” Harry interrupted, dismissing the rodent before he found out anything he shouldn’t. The four friends waited for Pettigrew to grab his portkey and had disappeared before Harry signalled that it was safe for Hermione to go on.

“You remember I told you about the legend of the Gryon?” She asked, “Well this is in the same vein, a legend surrounding the founders and the creation of the Rock of Initium. About a thousand years ago, just after they had started Hogwarts, the founders were looking for a divination teacher, Gryffindor and Slytherin, especially, didn’t care for the subject but Ravenclaw was the daughter of a famous seer and insisted that it should be taught. It was during the interview of one of the candidates when the prophecy was made. It stated that, in the future, Gryffindor and Slytherin would do battle once more. A war to end all magical wars as the magical and muggle worlds lay at stake and should evil prevail a shroud of darkness would fall upon the earth. It said that the powers of the elements were the key, that all would be needed in one man if the light were to prevail.”

“The elements?” Harry asked.

“Yes, at this time, mankind believed that there were four elements that made up the earth and the universe; fire, water, earth and air. Each founder learnt early in life that they had great power over one of these elements; Gryffindor over fire, Slytherin over water, Ravenclaw over air and Hufflepuff over earth, they could manipulate these elements in a way even the most powerful of witches and wizards

could not. Anyway, the founders, who at this time were still getting along and couldn't consider that one of them would turn to the dark, took the prophecy to mean that Gryffindor and Slytherin would fight together against an unknown foe and that if they were to emerge victorious one of them would have to be imbued with the power of all four elements. What they didn't know, however, is which one of them would need this great power and so it was put forward by Lady Ravenclaw that they should lock their elemental powers into an object, a large crystal of clinohumite to be precise. This object became the Rock of Initium. Not long after this, the founders started to fall out. Slytherin's chamber of secrets became a massive area of contention and led to him leaving the school and, ultimately, sinking deep into the dark arts. When Slytherin left the school, he took the Rock with him and he is rumoured to have corrupted it, turning it into an object of evil and making sure that only those he deemed fit would be able to use it. You can't use the Rock at anytime though and before the full moon, which is the only period in which it can be used, Gryffindor managed to steal it and brought it back to the school. When Slytherin challenged the power of the ministry of magic and declared war on those he deemed impure the founders realised what the prophecy must mean. The duty had fallen upon Hufflepuff, as the most peaceful of the four, to hide the rock and so Slytherin decided that he must capture her and force out of her the information he needed. Gryffindor heard of this through his spies, however, and went to stop him. The first great battle between the founders ensued at Hufflepuff manor, the two warrior founders fought to get the best of each other but they were evenly matched and it ended in a stalemate, but Helga Hufflepuff was killed in the crossfire. Both Slytherin and Gryffindor searched relentlessly for the Rock throughout their lifetimes but both died, as you know, at the battle of Coluber castle, before it could be found."

Harry took a moment to take all of this in, but found himself confused about something, "In my dream, Bellatrix said that the last owner had died two hundred years ago, but if Hufflepuff hid it, surely the last owner died a thousand years ago."

"Legend states that Hufflepuff left the Rock in the possession of her faithful house elf Mimlpy and that it has been passed down through the elf's family since then, dynasty records aren't too difficult to get a

hold of and the magic controlling house elves lets the ministry know when one has been born or died. But the important part of the story Harry, you must understand, is the prophecy, it stated that in the future Gryffindor and Slytherin would do battle, which they did, but it also stated that to be victorious, one of them would need to use the rock. Which they didn't."

"You're saying that the prophecy applies to Voldemort and me. That if I am to stand any chance of winning this war, I need to get to the Rock of Initium before Voldemort does."

"That is what the prophecy would seem to imply. Of course it could apply to your descendents, but Voldemort is the only known heir of Slytherin and to be honest I can't see him having kids."

"But even if I found it, I couldn't use it. You said yourself that Slytherin corrupted it and I'm fairly sure that he wouldn't deem me fit to use it." Harry said, his hopes sinking.

"Slytherin isn't alive anymore Harry, he can't decide who uses it, what he did was put a spell on it so that only those with Slytherin blood could use it and that the user would have to perform a dark ritual to access the stone's power. Not to mention the fact that he or she would have to be incredibly powerful to withstand that amount of magical power flooding into their system."

"But I don't have Slytherin blood in me. Voldemort has Gryffindor blood through the transfusion he forced in the cemetery but he didn't return the favour." Harry exclaimed incredulously, "Can't the spell on the rock be broken? Or the rock destroyed?"

"Every spell can be broken Harry." Hermione replied, "And every object destroyed. But it would take an enormous amount of power to do it. It is far more difficult to break a curse than it is to perform one and Salazar Slytherin was one of the most powerful wizards to ever live and he probably had help from his servants in securing the spell, he was, after all, keeping it from being broken by three more of the most powerful witches and wizards to ever walk the planet. Besides, if the prophecy is to be believed, it is you who needs the Rock's power, not Voldemort."

“So it’s hopeless?” Harry asked, slumping into a chair which appeared to accommodate him.

“No. Not at all.” Hermione replied, “If you would have let me finish Harry, I was going to tell you that you don’t need Voldemort’s blood to attain the blood of Salazar Slytherin, it already resides in you. Gryffindor and Slytherin were not just friends Harry, but family. Admittedly, they were quite distantly related but they were blood relatives nonetheless, with a common ancestor some four hundred years before who went by the name Merlin the Great.”

This piece of information hit Harry with the force of a steam train, but he quickly shook himself out of it. He didn’t have time to dwell on the fact that he was directly descended from the most famous and powerful wizard of all, there were more important issues at stake.

“But that is going back generations before the founders, I don’t have Slytherin’s blood in me, we just share some common blood, and whatever blood we do share will be vastly watered down with over a thousand years worth of generations and new blood being introduced to the line.” He said.

“It will be enough. He could have cursed the Rock to only work for him Harry and that, naturally, would mean that you would have to destroy the curse or the Rock itself, but he didn’t. It seems that Slytherin, at least, was smart enough to realise that he may not be the last ‘Slytherin’ and he decided to curse the Rock so that his descendants would be able to use it should he not find it. But, the thing is, Slytherin didn’t know how far forward in time this would be and, though most purebloods, at least, are related and he would have to have put on some sort of limit, I doubt that it will exclude you.”

Harry just sat, thinking, taking in all Hermione he had told him and trying to figure out how to use it. He still had to somehow to get as many magical creatures as he could on side and, naturally, the order would have to be told of this. He would also need to continue in his training and the training of the DA, but this information was of vital importance and he needed to track down the object before Voldemort did.

“How exactly is it you know all of this?” Ron asked, speaking for the first time. “I mean, you grew up with muggles. Bits of this story seem familiar to me but you seem to have memorised the whole thing back to front.”

“It’s called reading Ron. All of this is in ‘Hogwarts: A History’.” Hermione replied. “If you would just pick up the book once, you would know-”

“This isn’t the time to have this debate. Hermione can you get me the dynasty records of house elves?” Harry interrupted.

“No, they are contained in the ministry of magic and you need to be a ministry employee of a certain level to get hold of them. I tried to get them for SPEW, but not even Mr. Weasley could get them for me.”

“Since when has my Dad been-” Ron began, but once again Harry interrupted.

“Thane is still a ministry employee and as an Auror he will have enough clearance to get in to any department, I’ll talk to him about it tomorrow. Once we have the records I want you three to go through them for me and search for Mimpy and her descendants, find anything you can.”

“What about you?” Ginny asked.

“The order will need telling of this and then I am going to meet with as many different magical creatures as I can, Voldemort has them, so must we. I need to somehow get them to meet with me and convince them that our fight is their fight too. But it’s getting late, we can talk more about this in the morning. I don’t know about you guys but I’m about ready to drop and I’d prefer it to be in my own bed rather than on the Room of Requirements stone floor.”

The three of them murmured in agreement and followed Harry as he left the Room of Requirements and walked up stairs to Gryffindor tower. Harry Potter then climbed into bed and fell into a dreamless sleep.

The next day seemed to go on forever, even DADA with Thane which was always a bit of a laugh. Finally though, the afternoon came and, seeing as he had no lessons, he decided to start preparation for his meeting with Ron, Ginny and Hermione that evening. Returning to his dormitory, Harry started to think of possible ways to get the heads of the different magical creatures of and around Hogwarts to meet with him without him becoming a tasty meal. Obviously he could send messages to the more intelligent creatures such as the centaurs but he also wanted the services of beasts such as Dragons and Graphorns and for that he needed something a little more inventive. For hours he sat and thought and came up with nothing, what he did decide, however, was to invite a representative from the Goblins they did, after all, control the money of wizards and witched, not to mention the fact that they were powerful magical creatures in their own right.

Deciding that he would wait for the others to come back so they could decide upon a plan together, Harry started working on creating well worded magical letters to the more intelligent beings he was contacting. Like howlers but blue in colour and they spoke quietly, the letters were carefully written, giving little information but insinuating that their peoples were in danger and to meet him in a clearing in the forbidden forest at nine O'clock that night. He sent these letters to the Goblins, the Centaurs and Grawp, who had steadily become more and more intelligent after spending so much time with Hagrid. He then called for Dobby and asked him personally invite the trolls along, as he felt that they would react better to one on one interaction and Dobby was then to fetch Buckbeak from his residence in number twelve Grimmauld place.

Out of the list of creatures Harry wanted to invite to his meeting, that left the Graphorns, the Unicorns, the Thestrals and the Dragons whom he still had to somehow invite. At four O'clock, Ginny, Ron and Hermione finished their lessons and joined Harry in the dormitory. When they had all sat down Harry explained what he had done and what his problems were.

"So any ideas?" He said as his explanation came to an end.

“Well the Thestrals should be easy enough.” Ginny replied, “From what Hagrid taught us last year, they pretty much follow where they are led, as long as you are kind to them.”

“Unicorns will always respond to a call from a light wizard,” Hermione added, “if you set up a beacon of light magic in the clearing, it should be attracted to it. As for the others, I have no idea, they really are beasts and won’t fight for the sake of what it right. Naturally they would be attracted by the smell of meat, but I don’t think that would put them in the right mindset, they may well just attack you as soon as you walk into the clearing. You or the other creatures.”

“The Dragons wouldn’t be able to smell the meat anyway.” Harry replied, “They live in the mountains, not in the forest.”

“Dragons may be beasts but they are very loyal to their own, if you could convince them that a member of their herd is in trouble, they would come.” Ron put in.

“That’s actually a good idea.” Ginny said, “And Dragons sense each others presence by their magical fire. If you charmed some wood with magical fire and made it strong enough, I’m sure a dragon would come and investigate.”

“Well then that leaves the Graphorns.” Harry said, “Are they attracted by anything? A giant horn perhaps.”

“I think your best shot would be to just do nothing.” Hermione responded. “Graphorns aren’t smart animals and they aren’t even particularly loyal or protective of their herd but they are curious and they are sensitive to magical power. I’m sure with the amount and variety of magical power in the clearing, at least one Graphorn will come to see what’s happening.”

“Well I suppose I better go and set up some magical fire and a light beacon in the clearing. After I’ve done that I’ll go and tell the order about the Rock and if you two could lead the Thestral into the correct part of the forest it would be much appreciated. If you do it while I’m at the order meeting, I’ll go to the clearing as soon as I get back.”

“What about the documents on Mimpily and her family?” Ginny asked.

“I’ll get a message to Thane about them during the meeting and hopefully he can get them to you while I’m at the clearing. So, if there’s nothing else, let’s get to work.”

Entering the clearing in the forest where the meeting was to take place, Harry started to place spells around it. First of all he placed some secrecy charms around the place to make sure that he wasn’t overheard both by the Death eaters and the Order. He then set about the appropriate spells for the fire and the beacon. He set up the beacon of light magic first but magically repressed it so that the Unicorn wouldn’t turn up, see there was nobody there and then go away. The fire too was repressed magically, the last thing Ginny, Ron and Hermione wanted to find when they turned up with the Thestral was a dragon searching for its brother. Both were set to begin at half past eight to give them plenty of time to get to the clearing.

With that done, Harry checked his watch to find that it was seven O’clock, the meeting was due to begin in fifteen minutes, called by Remus to discuss the protection of the Order’s headquarters. This of course, had all been set up by Harry. Not wanting Remus to have to stall for long, Harry walked out of the forest and towards the gates to Hogsmeade at the bottom of the Hogwarts grounds and its anti-apparation curse. Upon reaching the edge of the grounds, Harry Potter spun on his heel and silently disappeared into thin air.

Reappearing in in Sirius’ old room in 12 Grimmauld place, Harry walked up to the small house elf sat on his old bed.

“Thanks for everything you’ve done today Dobby.” He said, “Sometimes I think you are putting more effort into this war effort than I am.”

“Dobby is happy to do it Harry Potter sir.” Dobby replied, “It is an honour to help the great Harry Potter defeat He who must not be named. Is you ready for Dobby to apparate you into the kitchen?”

“Almost Dobby, let me just disillusion you. We have to put in a bit of showmanship, we don’t want the order knowing how I do it.”

With that, Harry tapped his wand on to Dobby's head and watched as the elf disappeared in front of his eyes. He then felt the elf grab his hand and a second later the two of them disappeared from Sirius' bedroom.

"Hey guys. How's the war winning going?" Harry said as he materialised in the kitchen and meeting place of the Order of the Phoenix.

"How do you keep on getting in here?" McGonagall asked after recovering from the shock.

"Not important." Harry replied, "What is important is what I have got to tell you."

"Potter you are not part of the Order you can't just-"

"Minerva, if Harry took the effort to break into the meeting room of the Order of the Phoenix just to tell us some information, perhaps it would be wise to listen to him." Remus interrupted, winking at Harry. Those who were about to speak up seemed to begrudgingly accept this reasoning and silence fell over the room.

"Thank you Remus." Harry said before launching into his explanation. "I have received information from my sources that Voldemort is searching for an object of immense power. He has been searching tirelessly for months, which is why he has been generally fairly quiet over the year. After months of research and 'coercing' information he managed to track down the location of this object and since the start of the year has been pinpointing the island where it is located as it is, of course unplottable and breaking down the wards which protect it. Ladies and Gentlemen, should this object fall into Lord Voldemort's hands, he would become indestructible, almost immortal in his power. For this object is called the Rock of Initium."

A general murmuring of shock, fear and confusion spread around the room as the order members asked one another what this meant and discussed its repercussions. Dumbledore alone remained silent, his eyebrows raised slightly as he stared intently at Harry. Harry took

advantage of this distraction and as the Order members talked amongst themselves, gave a small wave of his hand, magicking a note from his pocket and into Thane's. Thane noticed this and looked up at Harry while putting his hand to his pocket to take out the note. Harry, however, shook his head almost imperceptibly and the teacher removed his hand and continued his discussion with Remus. After allowing the conversations to escalate for a few moments, Dumbledore raised his hands and the noise instantly died away, the Order's attention refocused on Harry and Dumbledore.

"Who is your source?" He asked.

"I'm afraid I'm going to have to keep that to myself Professor, but suffice to say that he's reliable. Voldemort has been after the rock for about a year and has tracked down its location to an island in the North sea, since he learned of this, he has been trying to break the wards on the island which, as you can imagine, are very strong."

"How strong?" Thane enquired.

"I don't know. All we really have to go on is the legend and this states that Helga Hufflepuff gave the rock to her faithful house elf on a small but very well protected island and it has stayed in the elf's family ever since."

"You do realise the significance of what you are telling us Potter?" McGonagall spoke once more, her snippy attitude having faded at the importance of the information, "You are telling us that the Rock of Initium is real, that the legends are true, that the prophecy is true."

"Yes." Harry replied simply.

"If Voldemort is allowed to acquire the Rock of Initium then this war is effectively over. Lord Voldemort with the elemental powers of the four founders, it isn't even worth thinking about." Dumbledore said.

"Well you better start thinking about it," Harry interjected, "because I'm under the impression that he's getting close and we need to get to that island before he does. I trust you know the legend professor?"

And the prophecy it contains? I'm sure that, if it is true, we all appreciate the relevance of this now."

"I'm unfamiliar with the legend of the Rock of Initium Albus, what is this prophecy?" Moody growled.

"According to legend, the founders created the Rock of Initium because of a prophecy made shortly after the formation of Hogwarts. It stated that there was to be war to end all wars, that the world itself lay at stake and that Gryffindor and Slytherin would, again do battle. It then went on to say that if the light was to be triumphant over the dark, all four of the elements would have to be carried in one vessel, the founders, as you know, were each the possessor of ultimate power over one of the four ancient elements. Soon after this the great war broke out between Slytherin and the minions he had gathered and the other three founders and their noble army and as you can imagine all went in search of the Rock which Helga Hufflepuff had hidden. Unfortunately, Hufflepuff was killed in the crossfire of a battle between the two male founders before she could tell of the secret of the Rocks location. And though Slytherin possessed the Rock for a brief time before it was recaptured and hidden and all of the founders died before the location was discovered. The prophecy stated that all of the elements would be needed to end the greatest of all magical wars, that either Slytherin or Gryffindor would have to have the power of the elements if they were to be triumphant. But this never came to pass and that leaves the prophecy open."

"You are suggesting that the prophecy refers not to the founders themselves but to members of their houses. That You Know Who is the Slytherin to whom the prophecy refers and the Gryffindor is you perhaps, and one of you have to be in possession of the power of the elements when you do battle for the final time." Professor McGonagall spoke once more, looking rather frightened.

"Not exactly." Harry spoke up as he turned away to exit the room, "You may tell them Headmaster, but it is not to leave this room."

"Harry wait." Dumbledore shouted him back and Harry turned just before the door, "I need to know who gave you this information."

“No you don’t.” Harry replied, “You need to do your job, track down the island and I will attempt to do the same. I will be in touch if any more information presents itself.”

With that, Harry walked out of the kitchen and spun on his heel, disappearing silently into the night. He reappeared at the gates of Hogwarts and paused for a second. He exhaled slowly as he looked out over the majestic spires of the only home he had ever known and was amazed and heartened that the sight still comforted him, he felt that darkness could never taint a building built on such pure magic and intentions. Smiling to himself, his apprehension seemed to wash away, for the time being at least, as he began his walk over the grounds and towards the ancient castle. As he neared its walls, however, he turned and instead walked past Hagrid’s cabin and into the forest.

Harry stood at the edge of a clearing in the forbidden forest and slowly took a deep breath in and out to steady his nerves. He then double checked his wand holster to make sure that he was properly armed, for mere metres away stood representatives of some of the most powerful magical species on the planet. And though Harry didn’t know how many had come, he could sense the brilliance of the collective magical power of the clearing.

Steeling himself, Harry marched into the clearing, his head held high and not faltering at the sight of such an array of magical beings, some of which he had never even seen before, in the middle was the beacon of pure magic, firing light high into the air, like a powerful search light. Harry turned it off with a wave of his wand, aware that it was an advertisement of their presence. Seeing that the creatures were gathered in a semi circle of sorts, Harry positioned himself in the centre and began to speak.

“I would like to thank you all for agreeing to see me.” He began.

“You didn’t give us much choice human.” A voice interrupted him, “You told us that there was a great danger to our herd, I was not to know that I would be party to this little gathering of humans and animals.”

“But there is a great threat to your herd Bane.” Harry replied calmly to the centaur’s outburst, “and there is also a threat, not only to my people, but to all of the creatures in this clearing. His name is Voldemort.”

For the first time, Harry looked around the clearing to see who and what had accepted his invitation and he was pleasantly surprised. As well as the centaur, there were representatives of the trolls, unicorns, Graphorns, Thestrals, Goblins, Hippogriffs (Buckbeak), giants, in the form of Grawp, and even the Dragons, though Harry was under no illusions that the dragon could understand what he was saying. It was stood next to the branch of magical fire, sniffing it and nudging it with its snout while occasionally looking up at Harry.

The troll, as the leader was one of the most intelligent and could just about understand him, as could Grawp, unicorns, though unable to speak, always seemed to understand and despite Buckbeak’s lack of understanding of English, he was always loyal to people who had been kind to him and Harry knew that he would defend him and his army against attack. That left the Thestrals and the Graphorns along with the dragons, whom Harry had to make understand him as well as convince them to side with him. He had a feeling that it was going to be a long night.

“We have been over this human,” Bane snarled, “Centaur’s do not convince themselves with the petty squabbling of the humans.”

“And you think that the outcome of this war won’t effect you Bane?” Harry asked, “Do you really believe that, should the death eaters be victorious, they would allow half-breeds and goblins and trolls and Giants to live along side them in any other role than that of a slave? Because if you do then you’re stupider than I thought and maybe I don’t want you to fight be side me. For that is what I ask. I came here today to ask the magical creatures in this clearing to go back to their kind and convince them that our fight is your fight and their fight. That if the death eaters win this war no species or kind other than pure-blooded wizard would live any sort of life that they would be enslaved and forced to carry out the will of wizards. Voldemort, at this very moment, is tracking down an object of stupendous power. An object that, should it fall to him, would surely mean the end of the war and

the end of the magical world as we know it. For if Voldemort should possess this object, neither I nor Dumbledore nor anyone or anything on this planet will have nearly enough power to take him down. I am not asking you to fight for me, but to fight with me for yourselves and the future of the magical world. I am asking you to help me stop Voldemort acquiring the Rock of Initium."

There was a gasp at these last words from the creatures that both understood, appreciated the relevance and had the ability to gasp (the goblin and Bane) and the unicorn seemed to become solemn, scraping at the ground with its hoof as it lowered its head. There was a pause as the creatures seemed to contemplate Harry's words and whether to help him or not.

"I will consider this matter further and discuss it with my herd." Bane announced a few minutes later, before trotting off into the forest.

"I too will return to my people with your proposition Mr. Potter." The Goblin said, "But I shall give them a favourable review of you and your cause" With that and a small bow, the Goblin disappeared.

"Grawp will help wizards stop Volder." Grawp said, patting Harry on the head and in the process almost knocking out the young Gryffindor. The troll grunted in agreement before the two of them sloped off back into the forest together.

The unicorn then stepped forward slightly, staring intently into Harry's eyes. Then, without warning, it nuzzled its head into Harry's hand and allowed him to stroke it before, with a small nod of the head, it galloped away. This left only the Dragon, a Welsh green, the Thestral, the Graphorn and Buckbeak in the clearing and these four soon became three as Buckbeak bowed low to Harry. Amazed, Harry bowed back before the Hippogriff stepped forward and nudged him playfully in the side. Harry stroked his old friend and a few seconds later, Buckbeak stepped back and, with another bow, flew into the night sky.

Left only with the three beasts who neither knew or understood him, Harry turned his attention to the Common Welsh Green Dragon who was staring interestedly at him, having by now realised that the

branch was not in fact a member of its herd, all that was keeping it at bay was the magical power it sensed from Harry and, therefore, the knowledge that this meal would fight back.

The Dragon's intense stare gave Harry an idea, however and so, without drawing his wand and spooking the beast, Harry slowly started to magically push his way into the Dragon's mind. He found little defence against this sort of attack and he was soon inside its head. What he saw was nothing like a human mind. Though there were traces of intelligent thought and even emotion, the thoughts and memories were much more erratic and Harry had to concentrate hard to slow them down into something comprehensible. When he had done this, he reached back through the link into his own mind and pictured, in his head, a memory. The Dragon recoiled slightly as it saw Voldemort torturing people, killing them and forcing people and creatures to act against their will. Harry then pictured the rock and the significance of it and Voldemort's desire to attain it, along with his own desire to stop him. Feeling the Dragon starting to get a little spooked, Harry withdrew from its mind and stared directly into its eyes, a stare that was returned unblinkingly before, suddenly, the dragon spread its wings and flew away towards the mountains north of Hogwarts.

Harry could only hope that the Dragon, along with the other creatures, would agree to help when the time came when he would call upon them. With this thought, Harry turned to the Thestrak and the Graphorn and repeated the process he had gone through with the Dragon. Soon as the Thestral flew away, Harry found himself alone in the clearing contemplating the night's events. It had gone better than he had expected, nothing had tried to attack him and he even felt that he had reached a few of them. Having said that, he still only had the House elves as magical creatures that he could definitely count upon fighting when the battle came. Knowing this, but also knowing that there was nothing he could do about it, not tonight at least, Harry extinguished the fire and walked out of the clearing in the forest, making his way back up to the great and magical castle that he called home and his friends who were undoubtedly waiting for him.

"How did the Order react?" Ginny asked as soon as Harry passed over the threshold of the entrance hall and into the castle. She, Ron

and Hermione had been waiting for his return, so they could talk about the implications of the meetings.

“Pretty much how you would expect.” Harry responded, “With shock. Fear. Confusion. Dumbledore just wanted to know where I got the information.”

“And I’m assuming you were less than forthcoming?” Ginny asked with a smile.

“Yep. Forthcoming is not the way I or the order would use to describe me, more irritating really. Anyway, they appreciate the significance of the situation sufficiently to sit up and take notice. They will be concentrating their efforts into tracking down the Rock from now on.”

“And how about the magical creatures, how did that go?” Ron asked.

“I’m really not sure. All of them seem interested but only Grawp actually gave confirmation that he would help. I’m fairly confident about Buckbeak and the Unicorns as well but apart from that, we’ll just have to hope. Did Thane get you the records?”

“Yes he was here just before you arrived.” Ginny responded, pulling a thick pile of documents from her bag.

“So what now?” Hermione asked.

“Well this your lucky day Hermione, because the four of us, including Ron, are going to the library. I’ll meet you there in about an hour, I have something to take care of first.”

Blaise Zabini sneered at the group of ape-like ignoramuses glancing at him from across the Slytherin room and talking conspiringly. He had never really fit in with the Slytherin crowd, he had the cunning, he had the street smarts and the desire to always win, what he lacked was contempt for the other houses and the people who dwelled within them. The sorting hat had had a particularly difficult job sorting him until he had made the decision for it, his family would never had forgiven him had he been in any other house.

Sometimes he wondered if he had made the right decision to insist on being placed in Slytherin, he sure as hell wouldn't be seeing the excuse for human beings that were his relatives again when he left Hogwarts. He was a stranger in his own common room, saved from bullying and torture only by his own talents at duelling. Feeling fed up, he got up out of his chair and walked up the stairs to his dormitory.

"Hello Blaise." A voice spoke from the darkness of the Dungeon room, as he closed the door.

"Harry!" Blaise exclaimed, hit by shock as he lit the candles of the room to reveal his superior in the DA and one of the only people he could even consider calling a friend. "How did you get in here? The wall hasn't opened for hours."

"Not important." Harry replied, "What is important is what I have to ask, as long as you have the answer. Tell me, what do you know of the Rock of Initium?"

Blaise looked somewhat confused but, after making sure that Harry was in fact serious, he answered. "It is a legend surrounding the four founders of Hogwarts and the creation a huge piece of Clinohumite imbued with their elemental powers. It-"

"I don't mean about the legend. What I am interested in is the actuality and if your Uncle or father or whoever ever mentioned the Rock in conversation."

"Harry I have already told you everything I know of Voldemort and as you know, I no longer have any sources in the death eaters."

"OK. I'm not accusing you of holding back information,. But is there anything that your uncle may have said about tracking down an object or going sailing around the North sea or anything that may have slipped by as irrelevant."

"The North sea?"

"Yes."

“Yes, I think he did say something about that, or going up to Scotland at least. He was complaining about not knowing when he would be able to go, but then shortly before he died, he said that he was going soon, anytime after April.”

“That gives us at least two weeks.”

“Yeah I guess. Harry, what is this about, it didn’t seem relevant at the time.”

“Don’t worry about it. I will call a meeting of the DA tomorrow to explain everything.”

With these final words, Harry left a rather confused looking Blaise and made his way upstairs to the seventh floor. Walking passed a blank stretch of wall three times, Harry imagined a small, cosy room with two comfortable chairs and a table. On the completion of his third pass of the stretch of the wall, a door materialised and Harry let himself in.

“Dobby.”

He spoke to the empty room. A few seconds later there was a small pop and a house elf appeared in the middle of the room facing away from Harry. Turning around, Dobby spotted him and his face broke out into a wide grin, bowing low, the house elf then ran up to him and stopped just short, seemingly restraining himself from jumping up and hugging the young wizard.

“What can Dobby be doing for you Harry Potter sir?” He squeaked.

“Sit down Dobby”, Harry responded and the elf complied, Harry taking the seat opposite. “Dobby I need you to do an important mission for me.”

“Anything Harry Potter sir.” The elf replied happily, enthusiastic to help his friend and idol.

“Wait, I haven’t told you what it is yet Dobby.” Harry said with a smile, “I need you to keep a close eye on the Order of the Phoenix. I know

that you're still watching their meetings, but I want you to spy on some of the leading members, especially Dumbledore and if there is a meeting between two or more of them, I want to know about it. What you would be looking for, Dobby, is any mention of the Rock of Initium. You heard what was said in the meeting earlier on so you understand the significance and importance of this. "

"Yes Harry Potter sir, Dobby will do it. He will find the information you need."

"Thank you Dobby, your role in this could be vital to the war effort."

Dobby nodded and, for the first time Harry could remember, looked solemn and determined while bowing once more and disappearing with a pop. Harry then stood up and walked out of the Room of Requirements and went to join his friends in the library. When he got there, he found the three of them surrounded by dozens of books on the founders of Hogwarts and magical objects, piled high around them and no doubt collected under the stewardship of a certain Hermione Granger.

"Anything?"

"Not yet." Ron replied, "Just what Hermione has told us anyway, it seems like all there is, is the legend."

"There must be more." Harry said, shaking his head, "If Voldemort can access this information then so can we. What about the restricted section?"

"We haven't started there yet." Hermione replied, "It's too risky before nightfall."

"We haven't got time to mess around. Voldemort could be as little as two weeks away from reaching the island. If you start on the records Ginny, You two can carry on with the books in here and I'll search through the restricted section. When Madame Pince comes, you can leave and I'll stay here invisible and see what I can find."

Harry didn't give them time to answer before disillusioning himself and going into the restricted section. They poured over texts for hours before and Ginny seemed to be making numerous notes before she, Ron and Hermione were forced to leave by Madame Pince at Curfew. Harry stayed alone, searching through hundreds of ancient tomes and praying that one of them could give him an idea of the location of the island and the object beyond that given in the legend and what he had already from Voldemort. But it was to no avail and soon Harry fell into an uneasy sleep amongst the books piled high in the restricted section of the library.

"Harry!" Someone hissed in his ear. "Harry!" Harry groggily opened his eyes to find Hermione standing over him and looking frantic. "There's something you really should know."

"What?" Harry asked, any tiredness disappearing instantly.

"Not here. Follow me."

Harry followed her out of the library, clearing away the books with a flick of his wand, and up towards Gryffindor tower. Once inside the common room, he was shepherded up to his dormitory where he found Ron and Ginny looking at him with grim expressions on their faces.

"What is it?" Harry asked, instantly very worried.

"Harry it's Snape. He has escaped from Azkaban."

“What!?” Harry exclaimed and Hermione recoiled slightly.

“He was being held at Azkaban while he awaited trial for Murder, conspiracy to commit murder and Death eater affiliation.” Ginny answered, “Obviously the Daily Prophet didn’t go into detail about how he did it but as far as we can tell the prison is still under ministry control. For now.”

“Having said that, I was listening to Dumbledore talking to McGonagall on the extendable ears and they seem to think that Voldemort was involved somehow.” Ron added.

Harry stood in thought for a moment, trying to calm himself down before he shouted; “Dobby!”

“Yes Harry Potter sir?” The elf replied as he materialised moments later.

“What do you know about Snape’s escape?”

“Headmaster Dumbledore has called a meeting of his order for this evening at nine pm Harry Potter sir. Dobby is not knowing anything until then.” Dobby said.

“Damn it!” Harry took a deep breath as he saw the elf jump in fright, “I’m sorry Dobby, thank you for the information. Keep me informed.”

Dobby took this as a dismissal and bowed before disappearing back to the kitchens. The next couple of minutes were spent in silence as the four friends thought about the implications of what they had just learned. Just then, Harry happened to glance down at his watch and realised that he no longer had the luxury of time to think, he was due in potions in five minutes time.

“We have to go Hermione. There’s nothing we can do about this at the moment guys, I’ll have Dobby report back on the order meeting and in the mean time we’ll focus on tracking down the island.”

With these final words, Harry walked, with Hermione, out of Gryffindor tower and down to potions with Grubbly-Plank. The lesson was not a

particularly interesting one and to Harry felt like torture as he had to endure an hour on a potion he had learnt months ago, knowing that he had much more important things to do. Eventually, however, and only after what felt like five potions lessons (with Snape), the bell to signal the end of class rang out and Harry and Hermione packed up their things and went to lunch.

After a quick lunch came Herbology, which was almost as bad as potions. Harry continually tapped his watch with his wand to ensure that it was in fact working and hadn't been bewitched to operate at a quarter of its normal speed. Finally the end of lessons came, however, and Harry left Herbology with Ron and Hermione and walked down to the library where they were due to meet up with Ginny.

"Ginny I noticed that you were scribbling down notes yesterday, what did you find out from Mimpoly's family records?" Harry asked as they settled in a quiet corner of the library, protected from unfriendly ears by the muffliato spell.

"Nothing to get excited about." Ginny replied, seeing the expectant look on her boyfriend's face, "They only confirmed what you heard from Voldemort; Mimpoly's family line goes down to a house elf called Custos, but he didn't have any descendants and is recorded of having died just over two hundred years ago."

"OK." Harry said, "I have a meeting scheduled with Wormtail just after the DA, so I'll ask him if he knows anything and tell him to keep an ear out for more information. Apart from that all that we can do is research in here and hope that either we find something or the Order do before Voldemort is able to get to the island."

The four of them spent the next three hours searching for something, anything that may give them a clue as to where this island was located. But it was to no avail. It seemed that the founders had done an excellent job in hiding the island, as there really was only the legend to go on and after three hours they had to give up as it was seven O'clock and time to tell the DA. As he was walking to the Room of Requirements, Harry's mind drifted back to the only good piece of information he was able to find. Located in an ancient and obscure manuscript and found in the restricted section of the library, it read;

"The huge piece of Clinohumite, known as the Rock of Initium, is to be suspended in the air next to a large window at full moon. While waiting for the moon to rise and shine through the Rock, the wizard must prepare a potion. Brewed between the hours the sun sets and the moon rises to the highest point of its journey through the sky, it must contain the blood of a foe spilled in cold blood stirred seven times clock-wise and seven anti-clockwise. The sliced heartstring of a dragon, cut into seven equal pieces must then be added and stirred in three and a half times clock-wise and three and a half times anti-clockwise. Forty nine sopophorous beans must then be added, followed immediately by seven thinly and evenly sliced Valerian roots before being stirred fourteen times anti-clockwise. Finally there must be the blood of a unicorn added seven minutes before the moon reaches its zenith in the night sky. The wizard must then drink a pint of said potion and stand before the Rock of Initium as the moon rises to its highest point in the sky, it should shine forth through the Rock of Clinohumite and strike the wizard in the chest. And so the wizard shall be imbued with the powers of the four ancient magical elements, should he live through such great power entering his body. "

This ritual sent a shiver down Harry's spine as he thought that he would one day have to go through it or else leave the world to Lord Voldemort's whim. He didn't have time to dwell on it, however - time was becoming a precious entity in Harry Potter's life - as he reached the Room of Requirements. He could hear murmurings of anticipation as he walked past the blank stretch of wall on the seventh floor for a third time and entered the room and knew that news must have spread of the importance of this meeting. Upon entering the room, he split from Ron, Ginny and Hermione and climbed up on to the stage. The conversation instantly vanished as Harry faced his crowd and began to speak.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we, the DA, have found what it is that Lord Voldemort has been searching for. It is, as we anticipated, an object which will imbue upon him enormous power the like the wizarding world has never seen and should he be allowed to attain this object not I, nor Dumbledore, nor anyone on this planet will have the power to face him in a duel and last for more than thirty seconds. The object he is after is the Rock of Initium."

Harry went on to explain the legend of the Rock, as, though there were a few gasps of shock and terror, for most, these words meant as little to them as they did to Harry when he first heard them uttered. After five minutes of talking, telling them (almost) all he knew of the legend and the prophecy and Mimpily, Harry's conclusion came to an end.

"...And though I know this has never been a game to you, I know that for many it has just become very real which is why I feel the need to offer you, once more, the chance to get out of this room and out of the DA . No one on here would look down upon you if you did just that."

Harry waited twenty seconds in silence, before breaking out in a grin as no one in the room so much as glanced at the door.

"Right, well we better get to work then. Vampire and Werewolf killing hexes."

The DA worked harder and more diligently than ever before in the light of the information they had just received and Harry was shocked as the entire room mastered the two powerful spells with half a lesson remaining and the group moved on to more powerful and border-line dark curses.

After two hours, the training session came to an end and the DA left one by one, each uttering encouraging words to Harry as they departed. Soon, once again, Harry, Ginny, Hermione and Ron were left alone in the Room of Requirements and they made pleasant conversation about the positive reaction of the DA and things in general while they waited for Wormtail to arrive. Eventually, after an hour of waiting, a small, rat-like man appeared in the air in front of them, via Harry's portkey and landed in a heap on the floor. Stumbling to his feet, Pettigrew addressed the four young wizards and witches, a look of angst and terror on his face as he was confronted with glares of absolute loathing.

"I have some information from the Dark Lord." He squeaked.

“What do you have regarding Snape’s escape?” Hermione asked and Wormtail looked towards Harry.

“Answer her.” He commanded and the rat started to speak in his monotonal, voice, his face clear of any emotion.

“Severus Snape escaped with the aid of the Dark Lord. Though the prison hasn’t fallen into his hands as of yet, he has his own men in place as warders and he has access to the plans and information on all of the prisoners. Snape now resides at the Dark Lord’s side and was rewarded for his loyalty, though he was punished in the first instance for allowing himself to be caught by Harry Potter.”

Harry thought about pursuing this line of questioning further but decided that there were more important things at stake.

“What information do you have on the Rock of Initium?” He asked.

“The Dark Lord has broken down the wards which make the island unplotable and has pin-pointed the exact location of the island where the Rock is located. Only a few fairly minor wards remain in place and the Dark Lord plans to break them and infiltrate the island next week.”

Harry’s heart rate sped up and he glanced at his friend’s and girlfriend’s faces to find looks of shock and fright which mirrored his own feelings. He knew that the outcome of the entire war may well rest on the answer to the next question.

“Do you know the location of the island?”

“Yes.” Came the reply and looks of glee were exchanged between the four friends.

“Where is it?” Harry asked. And the answer came, as ever, sounding as if the small, cowardly man was under the influence of veritaserum.

“It is located in the North sea, near Fair Isle, Latitude 59o North, Longitude 1o East.”

Harry quickly wrote this down and turned to his friends.

“Do you realise what this means?” He asked, “We can go to the island, break the remaining wards and take the Rock days before Voldemort even leaves. We even have the advantage of already being in Scotland. Wormtail, when exactly is Voldemort planning on going to the island?”

But no answer came, Harry turned to see the man looking at his hands and glancing around the room, looking shocked and confused.

“I don’t know.” He replied.

A look of Horror spread over Harry’s face. Wormtail had not answered in the same monotonous, emotionless voice he had in the past but in his regular squeaking, terror filled tones. Harry’s wand was out of his holster and in to his hand in less than a second, but it was too late. With the whispered words ‘The debt is repaid.’ Wormtail had grabbed the portkey which hung from his neck and disappeared to the headquarters of his master.

“No!” Harry screamed and then something dawned on him. He ran over to the spot where Wormtail had materialised ten minutes previously and traced his wand in a circle, ten feet in diameter. Muttering the incantations to the anti-portkey spell, Harry felt a strong magical force pushing against him.

“Get down.” He shouted and he, Ron, Hermione and Ginny threw themselves to the floor. At that moment the form of Lord Voldemort appeared in the room. He was ghostly and translucent, but fired deadly bolts of green magic as soon as he appeared. Luckily, they flew over everyone’s heads and Harry, from his position on the floor finished the incantation to the spell and the Dark Lord faded away into nothingness.

“What happened?” Ginny asked after a brief moment of shocked silence and as she picked herself up off the floor.

“When I sent Wormtail out as a spy I had to find away to talk to him in a secure place, free of any unfriendly ears. I negated the effects of the anti-portkey ward of that ten square foot space of the Room of

Requirements. So when Wormtail told me where the island was, he must have paid off his life debt to me and fled to tell Voldemort. Naturally I had to close the wards but I hadn't finished rebuilding them when Voldemort grabbed the portkey, the wards were partly in place so he couldn't fully materialise but, as you saw, he could appear enough to fire off a couple of spells before I could complete the spell." Harry replied.

"You do know what this means don't you? Wormtail will be telling Voldemort all he knows as we speak." Hermione said.

"I know." Harry responded, "It means that Voldemort plans will change, that in the next hour I have to call a meeting of the Order of the Phoenix, call upon the magical creatures willing to help in the war effort, gather together the DA, make a battle plan and somehow transport everyone to an island in the North sea. It means that tonight Gryffindor and Slytherin battle once more for the Rock of Initium and that the outcome of the war may well be decided by the actions we take in the next few hours."

"What are we waiting for then?" Ron asked, "Let's get going."

Harry nodded and gathered himself, taking a deep breath before springing into action. "Dobby!" He called out and was, as ever, immediately answered by a small pop and a house elf appearing in the room. "I need you to call an order meeting now Dobby."

"There is no need Harry Potter sir." Dobby replied, "Dobby is telling you, there is a meeting now to discuss Professor Snape's escape."

"Good. Go to the meeting and tell them that I am coming, don't let anyone leave because it is important." Dobby nodded and disappeared as Harry turned to his friends. "You three gather the DA, give them any information they may need but I am yet to tell them. I'll join you as soon as I get back from Grimmauld place."

With these words and feeling slightly overwhelmed but determined Harry nodded at his best friends and walked out of the room. He then reached out his hand and grabbed hold of his broom as it zoomed towards him courtesy of an 'accio' he had cast while in the Room of

Requirements. Mounting his Firebolt, Harry flew out of the nearest window and towards the edge of the anti-apparation wards. Upon reaching the end of the Hogwarts grounds, Harry vanished his firebolt with a flick of his wand and as he started to fall to earth, he twisted in the air and silently disappeared.

Reappearing in no time at all in Number 12 Grimmauld place, Harry decided that there was no time to be wasted and simply drew his wand and blew apart the door to the kitchen, where the meeting was taking place. A dozen spells flew towards Harry, but Harry was prepared for that inevitable eventuality and an apparation shield sprung into existence in front of him, swallowing all of the spells before disappearing, the second rip was nowhere to be seen.

“Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen.” Harry said as the dust of the explosion and the afterglow of the spells vanished. Gasps rang out through the room, not least due to their surprise that anyone could still be standing. “I have some information that may be of interest to you.

The next fifteen minutes were taken up with Harry explaining everything to the Order of the Phoenix. All that hadn’t been explained about the DA, Wormtail, the Rock of Initium and the island came out as he spoke to a silent and stunned kitchen. He knew that if he was to succeed in getting to the Rock before Voldemort, he would need the Order of the Phoenix on side and they needed to appreciate the seriousness of the situation.

“What do you suggest we do?” It was Dumbledore who had broken the silence and his words were met with shock, for his electric blue eyes were staring straight ahead directly in to Harry’s emerald green ones.

“I’m meeting with the DA when I get back to try and organise them and after that I will gather together all of the magical creatures who consent to come, though naturally we’ll have to leave a small contingency to protect Hogwarts, the House elves can do that but I think it would be wise to back them up with a couple of Witches or Wizards, I don’t know how powerful they are when it comes to fighting. As we know literally nothing about the island there isn’t much we can

do in the way of a battle plan, our best bet is that it has a hilly landscape with cliffs around the shore, likely with forest land, especially if it hasn't been touched by human kind for a thousand years, so dress for cold windy conditions. I would suggest that the Order gather as many of its soldiers as possible and meet me at Hogwarts in about two hours time, Voldemort also has to gather his army together so we don't have to worry about him finding the Rock before we get there. I'll leave the human defence of Hogwarts to you, Dobby can sort out the elves and I will talk to the magical creatures of and around Hogwarts."

"Very well Harry." Dumbledore replied, "You do what it is you need to do and I will arrange everything you suggested. The Order will be outside the Main entrance of Hogwarts in two hours time so that will be just past midnight."

Harry nodded, shocked at Dumbledore's compliance but knowing that there were more important matters to deal with. He turned to go but was called back.

"Mr. Potter?"

"Yes Headmaster?" Harry responded, ready for some form of attack.

"Good luck."

Harry nodded once more and turned to depart, feeling slightly suspicious and making brief eye contact with Remus and Thane who both looked like they too were trying to figure out Dumbledore's thinking and motive. Once outside the anti-apparation wards of the kitchen, Harry twisted on his heel and disappeared into the night with a swish of his cloak.

Harry landed just outside the wards of the castle and called upon his broom, reaching out his hand and catching it as it flew towards him. Riding on his firebolt, Harry reached the castle in no time and flew straight through the window opposite the Room of Requirement, landing smoothly just in front of the blank stretch of wall across from the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy. He then strolled casually into the

room only to find forty wands pointing in his direction and he even had to wave his hand to block a spell fired by one of the troops.

“That’s good, you’re alert. I trust that Ron, Hermione and Ginny have filled you in on the new developments concerning the Rock of Initium?” Harry said as the DA lowered their wands and there was a general murmuring of consensus.

“So it’s true then Harry?” Neville asked, “The entire legend was correct, both the island and the Rock of Initium really exist?”

“Not only does it really exist, but the Rock presents both the biggest threat and the biggest hope of our war effort.” Harry replied as he walked up on to the stage. “I suppose that I should be speaking great and inspiring words to you right now, but none spring to mind, I was never a brilliant public speaker. We will fight them on the beaches perhaps, Cry God for Harry, England and St. George would seem rather appropriate but then we’re not just fighting for England, but for the world. Nor do we know whether or not there will be beaches, that’s one thing Sir Winston had on us, he actually knew what the battleground looked like. We do in fact know next to nothing about the battlefield, or where the Rock is likely to be or whether we’ll be able to take the Rock freely even when and if we do find it, nor do we know much about the army we are facing but that they outnumber us both in persons and magical creatures and that the odds are stacked highly against us. One thing we do know, though, is that we will not go down without a fight. We know that as long as but one of us draws breath, Voldemort will not reign unopposed. We know that though times will be hard, though we will become tired and weary and injured, though not all of us will make it out alive, we will fight with every bit of heart and nerve and sinew that resides in our bodies and we will not give in. And I know that there is not a single group of people I would prefer to be fighting side by side with than the one standing in front of me. Because, though there may be more powerful groups of witches and wizards and though there may be more experienced groups and groups with greater numbers and weapons and support, there is most certainly no group, no army with greater heart and resolve and it would be an honour to fight and, if necessary die beside you.”

Harry's speech came to an end and Harry walked off the stage to rapturous applause and as he walked down amongst them, they reached out and patted him on the back, shouting encouraging words.

"Once again and for the final time, I feel obligated to tell you that no one expects you to do this." He spoke once more. "This, as I'm sure you are aware, is not a game. You could die on some distant field, a slow and painful death and I don't want anyone to be fighting because of peer pressure but because this is what they truly believe in. Now, I am going to make some final arrangements with the magical creatures of Hogwarts and if you feel that you can't fight then when I come back you will be gone from this room. For the rest of you, when the time comes you are to stick in groups of three or four and try and take people out one or two at a time. Higher ranked soldiers are each to be in command of three privates, so that would be Ron, Ginny, Hermione, Blaise and Neville, the rest of you group yourselves together, staying with friends is fine, it means you trust each other and that is vital. I'll return as soon as I can."

"Harry wait." A voice said from behind him as he walked out of the door. Pausing, Harry let Ginny catch up with him. "I thought you might like a bit of company."

Harry simply smiled at her and held the door open, following her out of the Room of Requirement.

"So where exactly are we going?" Ginny asked as they walked down the first set of moving stairs.

"In a bit we're going to see who out of the magical creatures I talked to actually show up, but first we're going to go and talk to the house elves about looking after Hogwarts while we're away." Harry replied.

Tickling the pear and walking into the kitchens, Harry and Ginny were mobbed by a wave of short, excitable house elves, carrying trays of cakes and snacks. Seeing who it was, however, they parted to let Dobby through to see them.

"Harry Potter sir." Dobby squeaked, looking serious as he knew the levity of the situation. "Has the time come?"

“Yes Dobby”, Harry replied, “You know what to do. Don’t worry about the cleaning, that can be taken care of by any elves, who are not prepared to fight, although we do have Dumbledore’s support on this so you may be able to convince a few more. You’re job for tonight is to patrol the castle, alert to signs of an enemy attack, if there is an attack then hold them off and contact me with all the vital information and I’ll send you some people.”

Dobby nodded and bowed low, the rest of the house elves becoming more solemn and serious, they had, it seemed, been filled in with the details of what they were to do.

“Good luck Dobby and the rest of you” Harry said, turning to leave.

“Good luck Harry potter sir and good luck Miss Weasy.” Dobby replied.

That done, the two of them headed out of the castle and into the clearing in the forest to call upon the magical creatures of Hogwarts to help them in their time of need and praying to God that some, at least, would show. Setting up a magical signal to lead the creatures back to him, Harry stood back, leaning on a tree and folding his arms, hating the inactivity but knowing there was nothing to do but wait.

Turning to look at Ginny, Harry saw that she was doing the same as he, leaning against a tree, her arms folded across her chest and her eyes far away from reality, thinking, Harry knew, of the coming battle and what it would mean. It was only there, standing in the dark and quiet forest with nought but his own thoughts to occupy him that Harry truly understood the implications for him. He had long known that this war could mean casualties, it had been proven again and again that he and the ones he cared about were not immune to the stark realities of conflict, but looking at Ginny, he realised that he had never even considered that he might lose her. It seemed strange, even to him, he had just made a speech to the DA saying that any of them could be killed and he had said the same many times before when trying to impress upon them the seriousness of the situation they found themselves in, but he had never considered that Ginny

Weasley could be one of one of them. He couldn't. She had come to mean too much to him.

Looking at her beautiful face, as the evening wind swept through her hair and her eyes gazed vacantly into the distance, Harry was filled with an overwhelming urge to stop her, to not let her risk herself for the sake of anyone or anything. His hand twitched as he even considered going for his wand and stunning her to prevent her from going into battle tonight, anything to protect her from the horrors that he knew were in store for them. But just then, Ginny looked in his direction and he caught her eye. Harry was hit immediately by the fire he saw in her eyes, reflecting, he knew, the fire she had burning in her heart and in her soul and he knew that she would never consent to stay behind while others went off to fight, that, just like him, she felt the burden of protecting her friends, her family and her world and truly believed that this burden lay as much on her shoulders as it did on his.

Ginny seemed to know exactly what Harry was thinking and held his gaze unwaveringly, before her face softened and a small but reassuring smile played on her lips and she reached out and took Harry's hand in hers as they stood together and waited. From that moment, Harry knew that he was beaten, that there was little point even mentioning that perhaps Ginny might stay behind. He knew the power that she held - he had taught her much of what she knew - but that didn't stop every inch of his heart and mind from screaming at him to stop her, to protect her and for just a second, Harry empathised with the decisions that Dumbledore had made in regard to him.

As soon as this thought entered his mind, however, it was interrupted as Harry sensed a magical presence coming their way. Drawing his wand, Harry snapped around, ready to fight, only to find dozens of Goblins standing before him, all stood dressed in shining and ornate silver armour and holding beautiful but malicious looking weapons of various kinds. There must have been over forty of them, led by the Goblin Harry had met in the clearing the other day. This goblin stepped forward towards him, his little arm outstretched and a smile on his face, there was something slightly disturbing about seeing a goblin smile.

"We were never properly introduced Mr. Potter, My name is Bogrok, chief financier of Gringotts bank." He began, "I have never been a great orator or inspirer Mr. Potter, unlike yourself I dare say, but I have taken your argument to all of the elves that I trust not to take such information to the dark lord and, as you can see, there are goblins willing to fight for your cause."

"Thank you Bogrok", Harry replied, taking the goblin's hand "and thank you to all of you. You can't know how much we appreciate your support and it will be an honour to fight beside you."

Harry was prevented from saying anything else, however, by a roar from deeper within the forest and Harry turned to see a herd of dragons and thestrals flying his way and, looking down, spotted the about forty Graphorns and thirty Unicorns following on foot. As they came to rest in front of him, the sheer bulk of the hundred or so creatures in front of him overwhelmed Harry and he found himself, just staring and individually meeting the eyes of the apparent leaders of these groups of magical creatures. Finally, the unicorn lowered it's head to Harry in a sort of bow. This action spread like a wave throughout the crowd as the unicorns copied their leader and the Dragons, Graphorns and Thestrals soon followed suit.

Harry glanced at Ginny, unsure of what to do and she just stared back at him, seemingly as confused as he was. Warily, they turned back to the creatures, before lowering their heads to return their bow. This, it seemed, is what the creatures were waiting for and they stood up straight again, before mixing amongst each other, to test the other species. The goblins, looked particularly worried as the dragons came up and started nudging them with their snouts.

This only left the trolls and the centaurs, along with Grawp, who were yet to show up. Buckbeak would be travelling with Hagrid. Looking at his watch, Harry began to grow anxious, they were due to meet with Dumbledore and the order in fifteen minutes and he still had to collect the DA. Taking out his Galleon, Harry sent a message to Ron and Hermione to meet them at the entrance to the castle and turned back to the creatures who were starting to get restless. 'I know how they feel.' He thought.

Just then, however, there came the unmistakable sound of trees being ripped from their roots, the floor shuddering as either many creatures or an extremely large creature made their way to the clearing. It actually turned out to be both. In a flurry of broken branches, falling leaves and roars of discontent from the other creatures, Grawp stumbled into the clearing, followed by the centaurs who, it would seem, were using the giant to carve a path.

“You came.” Harry said simply as Bane made his way to the front.

“Do not kid yourself human, it was not for you or your kind, but for the protection of my people.”

Harry simply nodded, but inwardly smiled. Whatever their motive, the centaurs agreement meant around fifty more soldiers for the fight and Harry knew that they would battle bravely in the face of the destruction of their herd.

“Good to see you Grawp.” Harry shouted up to the giant, who was looking curiously at Ginny and poking her gently with one large finger. Turning towards the source of the noise, Grawp seemed to recognise Harry for the first time and waved enthusiastically, a big smile on his face, before turning to inspect the goblins.

Minutes later, the strange group were joined by the trolls who made a slightly less spectacular entrance as they seemed to just wander in to the clearing without really understanding where they were and why. Delighted at the turnout and seeing that they only had five minutes before they were due to meet with the order, Harry turned to Ginny.

“Let’s go.” He said, smiling at her and offering his hand, which she took without hesitation. Together, the two of them led the odd but powerful and determined group of magical beasts and beings out of the clearing and towards the castle, where Harry could see over a hundred figures silhouetted in the moonlight.

As they got within about two hundred yards of the castle, Harry was able to make out the faces of the figures as the warm glow of Hogwarts bathed them in it’s light. The faces were, he noticed, all

looking in his direction and had, without exception, a look of incredulous shock upon them. As he got closer, he saw Thane shaking his head, laughter threatening to burst out from his lips as he surveyed the absurdity of the sight before him. Harry knew they must have made quite a picture, He and Ginny leading this assortment of magical beasts and beings like two pied pipers who had move from rats and children and on to slight more dangerous creatures.

As he drew up to the shocked looking soldiers, Harry took his hand from Ginny's grasp and greeted them friendly, shaking Thane's hand, as he was the only one who seemed to have recovered from the surprise. He then turned and nodded to Ron, Hermoine and the rest of his troops who were stood behind the order in the new battle robes which Harry had bought and duplicated for them, their wands grasped tightly in their hands and a scared but determined look on their pale faces. He then turned to Dumbledore and spoke.

"Ready?" He asked.

"None of us are Harry, but our hand has been forced. You don't have to do this, children should not have to deal in matters of war." Dumbledore replied.

"You're right, but as I have told you before headmaster, our hand too has been forced. There is no way you can win this battle without us, the odds are stacked against us as it is, you must understand this."

Dumbledore sighed and nodded, resigned to the fact that nothing he could say or do would persuade Harry away from his present course of action.

"Portkey?" He asked.

"I think that's the best way to do it, but with the creatures here, it needs to be big." Harry replied, trying to think of a solution. "I've got it." He continued after a short pause. And with that, he waved his wand, conjuring a huge rug, which materialised underneath their feet. The rug encompassed every human and creature there and Dumbledore realised Harry's plan.

“Everyone in duelling stance.” He commanded and the order held their wands in front of them in a fighting stance. Harry was amused to see that the DA didn’t move, looking to him to confirm or refute Dumbledore’s command. Harry nodded and they all took up duelling stances.

“It’s time.” Harry said. “Good luck everyone. Portus!”

Harry felt, as ever, a tug behind his stomach before he felt his feet leave solid ground and the magic of the portkey whisk him away to finally face his destiny. Reaching out beside him, he captured Ginny’s hand in his and as the world came into focus again, he guided them to a soft landing, along with Dumbledore, Moody, Thane and a few others, while the rest landed on their back sides.

Rain pelted down on to the island and Harry waved his wand over his eyes, performing a simple spell to improve his vision so that he could survey what would become their battlefield. The sky was black, mixed with the murky grey of storm clouds and provided little light as the moon was nowhere to be seen. The howling wind provided the musical back drop as Harry glanced out over the acres of grassy plains which spread across the island to the coast where there was a sheer drop over jagged rocks and to the choppy, malevolent sea below. In the distance and backing onto the far coast, there lay a large and beautiful but crumbling manor house, this must have been Hufflepuff’s family home. Next to the manor was a small wood, which spread over the land at the back of the house before falling away into the sea.

Around two hundred witches and wizards stood completely still, their wands pointed in front of them as they all surveyed the lie of the land in front of them. This wasn’t right. But for the whistling, howling wind, not a sound could be heard, Harry’s eyes raked over the landscape once more but still caught no sight of man nor beast and he started to worry. Voldemort should be here by now, the small island should be filled with Death eaters and dark creatures, searching for the Rock of Initium. But there was nothing. This wasn’t right at all.

Then he felt something, the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end and his magical sense picked up a huge flux of power.

“Get down!” He shouted, throwing himself to the floor and feeling rather than seeing the others do the same.

At that moment, hundreds of dark, cloaked figures materialised in front of them and a wave of green light lit up the island as masses of killing curses rushed towards the order and DA.

“Shields to the front!” Harry yelled his order above the noise of the wind and rain.

The front line of soldiers, made up of Harry, Dumbledore, Thane, Remus, Moody, Kingsley, Ginny and Blaise, along with a few order members Harry didn’t know, raised their wands in front of them and there was a collective shout of;

“Arma Agentum!”

A huge wall of shining silver materialised in front of the army as over a dozen shield conjuring charms took effect, blocking the massive attack like a Roman century might block a barrage of arrows. The spells hit the blockade and Harry felt the ground shudder beneath his feet with the sheer force of the magic as he fought, along with a dozen more of his compatriots, to push back the powerful, dark spells.

Harry closed his eyes briefly as he heard four quiet but resounding thuds as bodies fell to ground, the gaps in their shields proving ample space for bolts of pure evil power to get through and rip an entire family apart with one shattering blow. Their shields held, however, and the death eaters were forced to scatter, duck, dive, roll and block to escape from their own spells. Taking full advantage of having the upper hand, Dumbledore shouted;

“Charge!”

Hundreds of wizards, witches and magical creatures of all kinds charged forward, their wands held out in front of them and spells lighting up the night as curses and hexes were fired from both sides. Soon, Death eaters, Order members, DA soldiers and magical beasts and beings were all mixed as individual and group duels replaced

mass fighting. His troops had largely kept to his command and were fighting in small groups and taking out individual death eaters at a time with the magical beasts mostly fighting amongst themselves.

Harry quickly took out some minor death eaters, his powerful spells easily smashing through whatever resistance those weak little lap dogs could offer. Walking through the crowd, he quickly ducked as he sensed the dark presence of the killing curse heading his way, he felt it pass above his head and whipped around, silently firing an extrudo curse as his wand came level with his combatant. The large, burly death eater was taken by surprise by the quick counter attack and offered no resistance. The electric blue bolt struck the man in the chest and he was flung back through the crowd, slamming through his fellow death eaters and hitting the ground in the distance. He didn't get up again.

Suddenly, a great ROAR rang out through the crowd and Harry snapped around to find its source. His eyes widened for a moment as he saw a huge beast with thick reddish-brown hair and razor sharp teeth lumbering towards him, its five club feet thumping along the ground as it moved with surprising speed and agility. Harry brought his wand round to defend himself, but at that moment the Quintaped pounced, slamming its front paws into Harry's chest and pushing him to the ground.

His wand went spinning out of his hand, landing five feet away and just out of reach. Harry had but seconds to react as the beast prepared to bring down its large shaggy head to finish the job. Knowing that the moment had finally come to put all of the months of practice into action, Harry transformed in an instant, turning into the large, powerful beast he now knew was called a Gryon. Flinging the Quintaped off him with his hind legs, Harry sprung to his feet and ran towards it. Pouncing, he hit the beast with massive force and they both scratched and bit as they went tumbling over the ground. Harry eventually landed on top and scratched the five legged monster across the chest, leaving four long and deep gashes where his claws had torn through the flesh. The Quintaped roared in pain, but threw Harry off, flinging him on to the ground. Harry watched as the beast pounced towards him and seemed to fall in slow motion towards him, its claws out stretched and its face contorted into a sneering growl.

Knowing he had to end this quickly before he was seriously injured, Harry transformed back into his human form and thrust his hand upwards. The Quintaped was mere inches away when it was hit by a blue beam of light which escaped from Harry's outstretched hand. The extrudo curse flung the creature high into the sky and away from him and Harry jumped to his feet, knowing that the fall alone would not kill it. Silently summoning his wand, Harry walked calmly towards the beast who quickly scrambled to its feet and started to charge towards him. Harry merely stopped advancing and, with a moments slight hesitation, slashed his wand diagonally and aggressively down through the air. There was a second when nothing seemed to happen but then, with a roar of pain and a gushing of blood, the Quintaped's head separated from it's body and it fell to the ground.

Dusting himself down, and turning away from the decapitated animal which lay in front of him, Harry looked over the battlefield and was greeted by the sight of what seemed to be an endless ocean of bodies, both human and animal, doing battle for their lives and the survival of their planet. Harry was mesmerised as wands danced, almost beautifully, conjuring jets of light of all colours and size, claws slashed and jaws ripped into flesh, causing blood to spew as animals and humans alike jumped, dived, pounced and rolled as if caught in some sick, deadly ballet. Through the melee and chaos, Harry's eyes sought and captured one figure, a lone figure in the mist of battle whom he cared about more than anyone else on the field and he watched, his feet glued to the ground as she did battle, just over two hundred yards away, with one of his most sworn and deadly enemies, an enemy whom he despised almost as much as Voldemort himself. Bellatrix.

Harry started to run towards the two duelling women, his eyes focused only on the sight in front of him and his rage and power palpable as it hovered around him in a blinding glow, giving chills to everyone around him. To his horror, he saw Bellatrix slash her wand down and Ginny, running out of luck and skill, was thrown to the ground, her wand spiralling out of her hand and onto the ground behind her opponent and nemesis.

"You are a feisty one aren't you pretty?" Bella shrieked, her voice somehow ringing out above the deafly noise of battle, war and death, "We'll soon get that out of you. Crucio!"

"NO!" Harry screamed as he watched the spell race towards the girl he loved and he desperately twisted mid-stride, disappearing into thin air and sending himself flying through limbo as fast as his magic would allow. He landed directly in front of Ginny and braced himself just in time to feel the force of the powerful torturing spell strike him in the chest. He somehow retained his balance and remained upright as absolute agony tore through his body like burning knives continuously and endlessly stabbing him through the heart while piercing every inch of his person.

"Potter!" She exclaimed with surprise and relish, never slackening the power of the spell. "What a delightful surprise. My master will be so pleased when I deliver you to him, foetal and gibbering, tortured to insanity."

Harry vaguely heard her words through the pain but focused instead on fighting. Forcing his magic to come to his aid and end the pain and suffering which wracked it's master. Eventually he felt the pain start to wane as he pushed against it and eventually it faded to a dull ache, stored away in the back of his mind as he looked up and locked eyes with his enemy. He smiled at her. A smile which did not reach his eyes, not of happiness or joy but of a grim determination.

"I don't think so." he replied.

He flicked his hand and Bellatrix recoiled, raising a shield to defend herself against what she saw as an inevitable and imminent attack. The shield felt no magical blow, however, as Harry's magic whipped past her and to the ground behind. Ginny's wand flew obediently to his hand, before he threw it to her and shouted.

"Ginny run!"

His girlfriend hesitated for a second before responding to the command, running away from Bella and towards the position where

the bulk of the fighting was taking place. Harry, meanwhile, flicked his wrist again, drawing his own wand and steadying it at his opponent.

“You and me Bella. One on one.” He said, his voice quiet but ice cold and calculating, filled with unbridled loathing.

“Do you really think I’m that stupid Potter?” She replied and placed her wand to her own forearm.

Harry fired a dark spell with such power, speed and ferocity that it would have hit and taken down any normal witch, but Bella had been expecting it and threw herself to the ground as two loud pops rang out and two large death eaters appeared by Bellatrix’s side.

The two men fired off Avada Kedavras as soon as their feet felt solid ground, but Harry was too quick for them, raising a shining silver shield which easily took the spells’ power and flung them back at their casters. The death eaters jumped to the ground, rolling back up to their feet as Harry took advantage of the distraction, screaming

“Fulemenus laculor!” As he turned his wand in Bella’s direction.

A constant stream of pale blue electricity burst forth from Harry’s wand with incredible speed. Bella, however, was quicker and disappeared with a pop. Harry immediately disappeared himself, turning in limbo before landing in the exact same spot that he had left and sensing the dark magic of the Avada Kedavra curse as it passed through the space as he disappeared. Upon landing, Harry ignored the wand in his hand and thrust his palm out. The massive force of his Extrudo curse smashed into Bella’s shield and though the shield held, it could not withstand Harry’s curse and shield and owner were flung back a hundred yards.

Harry was about to finish the job, as Bella hastily picked herself up off the floor, but was forced to duck as two dark spells flew at his back. Harry rolled to avoid what he recognised as the condolesco curse as it shot towards him in his vulnerable position. He rolled to his feet and flung his wand round in a semi circle, conjuring chains which wrapped themselves around one of the death eaters ankles and tripped him up. The other shot a crucio at Harry and he sensed an Avada Kedavra

curse fly at his back courtesy of Bella's wand. Acting quickly, dove to the side, before apparating away as three spells flew at him. Landing on his feet, Harry shouted;

"Elicio Leonis!"

He watched, relieved and a little impressed with himself as a lion manifested in front of him and, with a low pitched growl, pounced at Bella who screamed and apparated to the side. Harry then turned his attention to his other opponents who were stood about fifty yards apart and who were advancing on Harry. Knowing that the lion would not hold Bella off for long and that he had to end this quickly, Harry fired two stunning curses at his enemies who quickly raised shields to defend themselves.

Harry took advantage of the distraction and apparated between the two death eaters. Concentrating hard on the piece of magic he knew would either end the duel or kill him, he slashed his wand and empty hand down simultaneously and shouted

"Scissum Intermundia!"

as two deadly bolts of green flew at him from both sides. To Harry's immense relief and satisfaction, the apparation shields had worked and the spells were swallowed by the gashes in space time. Harry did not close them, however, and a second later the spells flew from the opposite rip they had entered, flying towards the two men. The death eaters just had time to look shocked as they were both struck in the chest by an Avada Kedavra curse and collapsed to the ground, felled by each others wand.

Harry did not have time to relax, however, as he heard a loud whine and then a thump as his lion fell to the ground. Turning on his heel, Harry pointed his wand forwards as he saw a flaming spear flying towards him, closely followed by a powerful tearing hex. He turned the spear to ice and magically flung it back towards Bella before raising an advanced protego shield to block the hex. He then ran towards her, watching as she blew the ice block to pieces and prepared to attack. At that moment, however, Harry transformed, turning into his Gryon form before pouncing at the shocked Death

eater. He landed on her, his massive weight crushing her into the ground, but she somehow managed to fling him off of her with a powerful Extrudo. This was followed by a killing curse, aimed straight into the air.

Harry twisted in the air, transforming back into his human form before raising a silver shield to block the killing curse. The green bolt of light was sent back in the direction of it's caster and Bella had to roll up to her feet to avoid it, noticeably wobbly from the force of Harry's Gryphon animagus form. Harry began to fall to the floor but, just before he struck the ground, he apparated away, taking himself out of the firing line of Bella's wand and behind the powerful dark witch. Bellatrix turned and raised a silver shield, but Harry simply pointed his wand below it and, taking a note out of Voldemort's book, conjured a long, tentacled plant which reached up from the ground and grabbed her by the ankles, holding her fast.

Harry then accioed her shield and followed the spell with an Extrudo which threw her from the grasp of the plant a hundred yards away where she landed hard on her back. Harry then pointed his wand behind him and muttered "Pulsum!" The spell pushed at the air behind him and propelled him forwards towards the death eater. The witch was just pulling herself to her feet when Harry hit her with an Expelliarmus, disarming her and effectively ending the duel. She climbed to her feet regardless and pulled her hand back to slap Harry in the face. Harry simply caught her wrist and pushed her away before pointing his wand towards her and wordlessly forcing her to her knees. Bellatrix smirked at him and began to speak in that incessantly loathsome, shrieking voice.

"So you've finally learnt how to use a wand have you Potter?" She mocked, "It makes no difference. So send me to Azkaban, the Dark Lord will kill you on this field tonight and when he does, he will break me out of that god forsaken prison, just as he did last time, just as he did with Snape and Malfoy and the others. And when he does Potter, that is when we will have our fun. Because I am going to track down any of your friends who happen, through luck, to survive this purge and I am going to give them a very painful death."

Harry's mind immediately flashed to Ginny and the sight of her vulnerable in front of Bellatrix.

"The girl is important to you isn't she potter?" Bella said, "Yes, she will do nicely."

"Enough!" Harry boomed in reply, backhanding Bellatrix across the face and watching as she fell to the ground. As he looked down on his enemy, at the delight with which she took the blow, his mind wandered momentarily from battle and to a small paragraph written in an obscure book hundreds of years ago. The book, of course, contained the ritual of the Rock of Initium.

'Brewed between the hours the sun sets and the moon rises to the highest point of its journey through the sky, it must contain the blood of a foe spilled in cold blood stirred seven times clock-wise and seven anti-clockwise.'

"Your right." Harry said, his voice cracking slightly as he realised the vastness of the decision he had just made.

He fought against every fibre in his body which told him that this was not the right thing to do, that he should not stoop, that there had to be another way. But there wasn't. In his peripheral vision, his eyes focused deep within himself, he saw the look on his captive's face turn to triumph as she thought that he was about to let her go. Evil murderer or not, this delight at the thought of freedom still made the act harder to perform. Steeling himself, however, he looked in to her eyes, her smile faltered at the complete lack of warmth in the usually dazzling emerald green and, drawing his wand from his its holster, he spoke again.

"You're far too dangerous too be kept alive."

The triumphant expression on Bella's face just had time to turn to shock and fear before it was frozen that way forever, eerily and fittingly mirroring her cousin's. Harry thought of the hate he had for this woman and all she had done to him. He thought of the pain she had caused and how much he wanted her dead and then he whispered two deadly and life changing words.

“Avada Kedavra!”

Harry looked down upon the woman whom he had just robbed of life, his gaze unwavering and his deep green eyes unremorseful, if a little sad. He saw a little blood escape the corner of her mouth and bent down on one knee to wipe it away, remembering what he must now do. Taking his wand, he pressed it to the death eater's wrist, draining her blood, which he then placed into a vial he carried in his cloak pocket. The wind continued to blow, mercilessly lashing Harry with rain as he watched himself carry out the task at hand. That was the strange thing, he no longer seemed to be of himself, but a third person. Simply a viewer to the events taking place, as he drained Bella's blood on autopilot, as if he did this every day.

Harry stood back up and watched her for a second, his eyes travelling over her still body, half expecting her to sit up at any moment and strike him down. But she didn't. And as Harry took all of this in he felt...nothing. That was perhaps the most disturbing thing to Harry, he longed himself to have some sort of reaction to what he had just done, something to remind him that he was still human. He had expected to feel guilty, sad at the loss of the last shred of his innocence, even relieved and glad that he had rid the world of such a woman and avenged his godfather. But he didn't, he felt nothing but a dull, empty feeling in the pit of his stomach as if he had been hollowed by the evil he had just committed. Nothing but a small amount of sadness, not for the former woman lying in front of him but for himself and what he had become. A murderer.

The chill in the wind grew ever greater and slowly Harry started to feel his sadness envelop him. He started to shiver and he seemed to hear a whisper in his own mind. But soon this whisper grew in volume and became a piercing scream. A scream he knew very well and one that would haunt him for the rest of his life. His mother's scream. Dementors.

Pushing back the negative thoughts and feelings that were trying to penetrate his mind, Harry strengthened his occlumency shields so that he could fight without being reduced to a shivering wreck by the accumulated horrors of his past. His wand in hand, Harry turned towards the main field of battle and saw that his worst fears had been confirmed. Dementors. Hundreds of them, swooping down upon them as order members and his own soldiers tried desperately to fight back

the detestable creatures whilst still defending themselves against the unremitting onslaught of the death eaters.

Apparating into the centre of the chaos, Harry found that Dumbledore was nowhere to be seen and the light were now outnumbered more than two to one. He quickly formulated a plan and bellowed out his orders above the roaring wind.

“ The order and those who can’t perform a corporeal patronus encircle the rest of the DA. Do not attack. Remain on the defensive and protect those in the centre. The rest of you, wands to the skies and push away the negative thoughts trying to enter your minds. Patronuses on my command!”

He watched as the dementors seemed to sense the resistance and swooped up into the air for an attack. In his peripheral vision, Harry saw the order and some of his own troops form a protective barrier against the death eaters who now surrounded them on all sides. His focus was almost lost as he saw Neville go down, only to roll out of the way of a killing curse and jump to his feet and raise a shield once more, his leg bloodied from the impact of a curse but his face set in determination. As Harry refocused, the Dementors circled round in the sky and started to dive towards them, hundreds of the foul creatures, black and weightless plummeted to the ground, their grey, scabbed hands stretched out in front of them. Waiting until the opportune moment, Harry pushed the slow rattling breathes to the back of his mind, ignoring the all encompassing chill and focusing on the happiest thought that came to mind, well, more of a person than a thought. Ginny.

“NOW!” He cried as the dementors came almost within touching distance.

A huge cry of: “EXPECTO PATRONUM!”

came up from the crowd and animals and magical creatures of all kinds leapt from the wands of their masters and charged at the dark, evil beings, driving them back with their silvery glow, the embodiment of all that is good and joyous, doing deadly battle with creatures which emanated pure evil.

Keeping his wand focused on the dementors, Harry watched proudly as his stag ripped them apart with its antlers. Wave after wave of the beasts charged forwards and downwards, but, much like the people in the barrier around them, the patronuses formed a protective shield of light, forcing back the dementors which slowly started to flee.

It was then, however, that Harry felt a new dark presence, one that he had not yet felt tonight. Tearing his eyes from the spectacle in the sky, Harry found that the killing curses had remitted somewhat, the shields of the light proving to be almost impenetrable. But a new magically energy was building. With a feeling of horror in his gut, Harry realised what was about to happen and negated his own patronuses, the others would have to drive back the dementors on their own.

Pointing his wand directly up to the sky, Harry reached down into his magical core, searching for the sheer magical power that he knew would be needed and that would stretch even his magical reserves. Just as he felt the full extent of his power make its way to his finger tips, his body tingling with the magical energy now at his disposal, his peripheral vision saw dozens of the most powerful death eaters steady their wands at the crowd in the middle. Then, simultaneously, their wands erupted with constant jet black beams of light, which travelled at incredible speed towards the ring of witches and wizards protecting them.

At that moment, Harry forced his magic through his wand and high up into the air. Reaching its peak, the beam of translucent gold then spread out, enveloping both the soldiers in the middle and those on the outside in a force field of pure light magic. The pure dark spells struck the force field and dissipated all around it, the black mixing with gold and seemingly trying to force its way through. The vicious flow of black magic was never ending, however, and Harry felt himself start to weaken with the effort of holding it at bay and he went down on one knee, his eyes squeezed tightly shut as he forced all of his magic into the shield and prayed that the onslaught would soon let up. Just as this thought came to mind, however, he felt the effort ease and, opening his eyes, saw that Thane, Remus, Moody, McGonagall and Kingsley had all moved into the centre and were adding their own

magic to the force field as their places were taken by the, now victorious, dementor fighters who held the regular dark curses at bay.

Eventually, Harry felt the dark magic fade and die and the DA and order charged outwards as the shield vanished. Normal battling commenced and Harry was just about to climb to his feet and head straight back into battle when he saw a figure, just sitting up alone on the floor. Jumping to his feet and keeping low, Harry made his way over to the lone soldier, dreading what he would find when he got there.

“No.” Harry muttered as he saw who the boy was. “No. No. No. No.” Drawing level with him, Harry knelt at his side and grasped his face, trying to pull him around to look at him. He was met by resistance, however, as the young man pulled back, trying to pull his head away from the unwanted grasp. “NEVILLE LOOK AT ME!” Harry bellowed into the boy’s face as he managed to pull his head round to face him his. It was just as he had dreaded. Neville’s eyes did not meet Harry’s. They were completely empty and without focus. There but not. Existing without any warmth or humanity and devoid of life. Neville had been kissed.

Collapsing down on the wet ground, his face contorted with grief, Harry pulled Neville into a tight hug from behind as his former friend turned away from him. Neville Longbottom, Harry knew, was gone. His soul had left this world, leaving only it’s shell behind and though the body still had the mind and so could carry out basic, instinctive tasks, it was no longer Neville. Suddenly the body of what was Neville Longbottom started to squirm, flailing violently as his instinctive mind told him to get away from this potential threat. But Harry held him tight. He managed to keep his old friend almost still and leant forwards to whisper in his ear.

“Don’t worry Neville, you won’t be forced to suffer your parent’s fate. I won’t allow you the indignity of it.”

With these words, a green glow escaped Harry’s hands, passing onto Neville through his tight grasp of him and travelling all over his body. Harry felt him go lax in his arms and he released his friend, who flopped to the ground. Dead. Harry remained seated, his head in his

hands and filled with a sense of almost overwhelming loss at his friend's passing and what he had just been forced to do. He wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn't come. Years with the Dursleys had taught Harry in his early childhood that crying would only get you further punishment. That no one loved him and that no one would come to help him. And even now, with masses of loving friends and even family, as Harry looked at the dead body of one of his closest friends, someone who had been nothing but loyal and kind to him and even as he felt as if his soul was tearing apart, he just couldn't cry.

Turning away from Neville's body to try and somehow ease the great anguish and grief that tore through him, Harry looked out over the battlefield once more. The battle was, once again, spread over the land, with the numbers getting more even as his troops followed his orders and took the death eaters down one by one. He saw dragons roaring and clawing at each other while belching fire at anyone or anything that was foolish enough to try and attack it. The goblins were fighting heroically with medieval weapons and their own brand of magic while beasts and beings tore lumps of flesh from each other and more and more bodies littered the ground. He then found himself watching Thane as he battled bravely against two death eaters Harry recognised as Mulciber and Macnair, Harry's teacher and friend seemed to have little problem against them and Harry smiled slightly as he managed to bring them both to their knees.

Eventually his eyes came to rest on one death eater, a huge lump of a man who bulged out of his black robes. He was laughing, cackling maniacally as he directed his wand downwards at a small boy who was rolling on the floor, writhing in agony. As the boy turned in his direction, Harry saw his face. It was Colin Creevey, the boy who had given Harry nothing but his undying friendship and support and he was being tortured relentlessly and mercilessly by a piece of scum who found it somehow entertaining.

In that moment, fury, pure and unbridled, encircled Harry's heart and mind, wrapping them in its power and sparking a surge of power as Harry looked out over the scene unfolding before him. His eyes glowed a bright and brilliant emerald green and he seemed to emanate magical power, as everyone around him felt the hairs on the back of their necks stand up and goosebumps rise on their skin.

Leaping to his feet, Harry moved at incredible speed as he ran over to the death eater and slashed his wand horizontally through the air. Not even slowing down, Harry felt a grim satisfaction as he saw the death eater's head disconnect itself from his body in an outpouring of blood and sinew and he flopped down on to the ground.

Numerous death eaters turned to face him as Harry charged through their masses, but few even had time to mount a defence. Ducking a killing curse, he kept running straight forward at a terrified looking death eater who unleashed a barrage of spells from his wand to try and halt Harry's advance. Harry simply apparated straight forward and behind the travelling curses, landing inches from the death eater and hitting him with immense power on the nose which broke with a sickening crunch. The death eater doubled over in pain, holding his nose and Harry pointed his wand to the man's stomach. With a powerful Avada Kedavra, the death eater was blown into the air and landed on the ground with a thump, never to get up again.

Harry continued through the crowd, ducking, diving and rolling out the way of deadly curses, before responding with his own, leaving a trail of bloodshed in his wake. Raising a shield to block the black and red curses of the two death eaters in front of him, Harry fired a rope from under it, which wrapped itself around both of their ankles and sent them flying to the ground. Turning to the side, he blew a death eater who was trying to sneak up on him high into the air and across the battlefield before turning back to the two in front of him. Dodging a killing curse, he yelled;

"Confringo!"

The death eaters both raised shields to stop the exploding curse, but Harry redirected his wand and flung an unsuspecting death eater into its path. It struck the pathetic, lap dog of a man and exploded with massive force, blowing all three of the death eaters into oblivion. At that moment, as Harry looked around for more targets, he sensed a huge amount of deadly magical power heading his way. Turning on his heel, he raised a silver shield and ducked behind it as a dozen dark curses of all kinds rammed into it and tried to force their way through.

Harry struggled to keep the spells at bay and knew that there must be some serious power behind them. He tried to find room to counter but the barrage was constant and he knew that any attempt to emerge from his shield would be a deadly mistake. Instead, he turned his wand on himself. Waving it in a complicated set of motions, he found that first his hearing disappeared and then his sight. Crouching behind his shield, deaf and blind, Harry reached out with his magic and sensed twelve individuals, led by one very powerful death eater.

Pointing his wand from behind his shield and in their general direction he shouted (or at least he thought he did, he couldn't hear himself)

"Lumos Maxima!"

Not giving them any time to recover he then cried;

"Intransitus!"

A bright light enveloped the surrounding area as an agonising and relentless white noise rang out over the wind and noise of battle, disorientating the death eaters and anyone else who was unfortunate to find themselves in Harry's immediate vicinity. Harry, who was of course protected from his own spell, then apparated into the death eaters' midst and with just his magical senses to guide him, started firing spells.

As the glare cleared and the noise faded, everyone around that area, turned to the source of the chaos to find Harry stood over the bodies of a dozen death eaters including one Antonin Dolohov, his eyesight and hearing now repaired and feeling a grim satisfaction at having taken down one of Voldemort's most senior lackeys. There was a brief pause of shock before the death eaters started firing spell after spell at Harry and, after deflecting the first few, was forced to apparate away and to relative safety, away from most of the fighting.

He was just about to rejoin the action and launch himself back into battle when a piercing and agonising pain wracked Harry Potter's scar and he went down to the floor. Realising that he was still yet to see Voldemort, Harry cautiously lowered his occlumency shields and

soon his world faded and he looked out over a different view through different eyes.

The manor house rose above him, crumbling but still beautiful and elegant, attributes that were lost on the soulless man who stalked its grounds. Making his way by the side of the house, he came to the small wood at the back and ventured in, his magical senses guiding him to his ultimate destination and his ultimate prize. His eyes tracked over the land for any clues as to where it might be and to ascertain what, if anything, might be protecting it.

What was that? He felt a small tingle of magical power, coming from behind him, it seemed somehow restrained as if it was trying to hide itself. Was it the Rock? No, the magic was light and the Rock had long ago been corrupted to the dark by his ancestor, Salazar Slytherin. So that must mean...

He swung his body around, raising a silver shield with his wand which jumped to his hand at the first sign of danger. A gold and green bolt of light struck the shield and rebounded back at its caster who simply ducked out of its way.

"Sneaking up on me Dumbledore. Not very gentlemanly I would say." Lord Voldemort hissed at his old nemesis.

"Even manners will not restrain me from banishing you this night Tom." The old man replied, "A lot of blood has been shed tonight and it must to come to an end. Whatever it takes."

"It will take more than you have to banish me Dumbledore. The bloodshed tonight was necessary as a distraction for your pathetic forces and while they and Potter's band of merry men tire themselves and die off I will slip away with the Rock of Initium." Voldemort replied.

"It is not just the light that has lost good men and women tonight Tom. Bellatrix is dead, so is Dolohov, along with dozens more of your slaves." Dumbledore said calmly, his wand still following every move the serpentine man made. Voldemort didn't even flinch.

“A shame. But I’m sure I’ll get over my great loss Dumbledore.” Voldemort replied sarcastically, “Minions can be replaced, leaders can not so easily. Now why don’t we see the light side try. Avada Kedavra!”

The vision faded and died before Harry saw whether or not the killing curse had found its target. Shaking his head, Harry got slowly to his feet and dried himself with his wand, an incessant thumping pain still present in his scar. Knowing that he had to get to Dumbledore before he was killed and Voldemort got away with the Rock, Harry pushed the pain to the back of his mind and started to make his way to the wood.

He knew that he couldn’t risk using magic to travel as Voldemort would sense it and the element of surprise would be lost so Harry decided to make his way there on foot and that meant going through the battle.

Running forwards into the crowd, Harry pointed his wand to the floor at the feet of the half dozen or so death eaters who had turned to face him.

“Lubricus Humi!” He cried and a slippery substance materialised on the floor at their feet.

The death eaters tried to dodge this substance and this proved a fatal mistake as they started to lose their footing and tumbled into each other, landing on their backsides. Harry, meanwhile, pointed his wand behind him and down and yelled;

“Pulsum!” The propulsion spells shot him over the slippery solution and the death eaters and he guided himself to a soft landing the other side before snapping round and pointing his wand to where the death eaters were still trying to find their feet.

“Permiltus Conflus Visco!”

A dozen spells flew from Harry’s wand, one after an other like machine gun fire, some missing and burying themselves into the ground, but others finding their targets, and causing the death eaters

to swell outwards and horrifically explode in a shower of blood, guts and gore. Turning back around, Harry started to run towards the manor house and Voldemort. He made his way through the crowd, stunning, killing and otherwise taking out anyone and anything that stood in his way. He was almost clear of the bulk of the fighting when, in his peripheral vision, he caught a greyish blur heading his way.

Aware of the danger he could be in, he whipped around, bringing his wand up in front of him. But, instead of seeing a dark spell, shooting towards him, he saw a tall, pale, humanoid creature running at super human speed in his direction. Harry pointed his wand at the creature and his mouth started to form the words of the vampire killing curse but it was too late. The night stalker pounced on him, sending his wand spinning out of his hand and Harry himself tumbling to the floor. Harry could feel it's putrid breath as it lowered it's head towards his neck and he knew that he would have to act fast.

Harry transformed into his Gryon form and kicked the vampire from him, before jumping to his feet and starting to circle his prey. The vampire merely smiled, however, and, looking round, Harry saw about ten of his brethren advancing on him from all sides. Making his decision, Harry changed back to his human form and, waving his hand in a circle around him cried;

"Petroleus Aduro! Deflagratio!"

He was immediately encircled in flames, which leapt high around him and his opponent, fuelled by the petrol he had conjured on the ground. He had little time to relax, however, as the Vampire started to charge once more.

Harry raised his hand and yelled, "Necus Lamia!"

The vampire simply dodged to one side of the fatal curse and continued unwaveringly on it's path towards him. Harry was forced to throw himself onto the ground and roll back up to his feet as the vampire lunged for him, missing him by mere centimetres. Circling each other, the dark creature pounced again and Harry flung himself to one side, but this time his reactions were just a little too late. The vampire grabbed him by the arm and pulled Harry towards it, holding

him in a tight embrace as, once more, it's fangs bared and made to penetrate Harry's skin.

Harry grabbed the Vampire's arm with his free hand and the evil creature screamed and recoiled as it's arm was engulfed in flames. Taking control, Harry elbowed the vampire in the stomach and, twisting around, hit it in the face. He then delved into his battle robes inside pocket and pulled out an ornate, silver knife, one of the set he had taken from his parent's vault in Gringotts. The vampire leapt forward towards it's would be victim, but Harry took the knife and buried it into it's heart. The creature of the night stopped in shock and looked down at the knife in it's chest and Harry, still holding the knife, looked into it's eyes as he muttered the words;

"Necus Lamia!"

The vampire froze at the words of the vampire killing curse before turning to stone and crumbling to the ground. Placing his knife back in his pocket, Harry turned to find his protective flames dying out as the vampires found assistance from a death eater. Muttering,

"Fumeus Nebula!"

Harry waited until his smokescreen adequately covered him, before waving his wand over himself and watching as his hand faded out of sight along with, presumably, the rest of his body.

He crouched down and watched as the Vampires launched themselves forwards into the supposedly empty space. They looked around confused and most seemed to think he had just apparated away and turned back, making as if to walk away. They were pulled back, however, by the lead vampire as it sniffed the air.

"He's still here." The vampire growled, sniffing the air like a dog trying to locate its prey.

Harry was confused, Vampires' sense of smell wasn't that good. They could only really smell...blood. Slowly he looked down at his hand as he felt a small stinging pain on his hand which he had yet to notice. He had been cut at sometime in the chaos of battle and he hadn't

realised so was yet to heal himself as he had after his encounter with the quintaped. Slowly looking back up, Harry saw the Vampire looking straight at him and in a split second the beast launched itself at him. Harry twisted on the ground and apparated away from the theatre of conflict.

“Don’t move.” The vampire snarled. “He’s still nearby.” It sniffed the air once more and then paused, before collapsing to the ground, to reveal Harry Potter standing behind him.

“What gave me away?” Harry asked as he levelled his wand at the remaining vampires and placed his free hand to his mouth, sucking up the blood that had attracted the evil creatures.

The vampires seemed to hesitate for a second, but then charged at the human who had killed two of their own. Harry yelled;

“Permiltus Necus Lamia!”

The jet black beams of the vampire killing curse erupted from his wand one after the other as the vampires charged him down. The vampires started to fall to the ground as the curses found their targets but one remained as it drew close to Harry and he was forced to dive to the ground and roll to the side as it lunged at him. Coming up to his feet, Harry then pointed his wand to the ground and cried;

“Motus Humo!”

The ground crumbled at the vampire’s feet and it came tumbling down, falling towards Harry. Pulling the knife out of his pocket once more, Harry held it out in front of him and plunged it into the falling vampire’s head. The beast fell to the floor, but jumped back up, ripping the knife out of it’s head and advancing upon Harry once more, dodging every spell Harry threw at it as it moved from side to side at incredible speed and forcing Harry to dive all over the place to avoid the vampire’s fangs. Realising that he had to come up with a different strategy, Harry pointed his wand to the floor and shouted;

“Lentesco Humi!”

The vampire ground to a halt as a sticky substance filled the floor and Harry smiled at it before bringing his wand in front of him and muttering;

“Necus Lamia!”

The dark creature offered no resistance this time as the black beam of light struck him in the chest and he crumbled to the ground. Harry reached out his hand and summoned his knife to him, stowing it in his pocket for later use before turning back to the wood and started to creep towards it.

Entering the wood, as a pink and blue Zebra crossed his path, ridden by a cackling leprechaun, Harry began to hear shouts and cracks from a far and he put a silencio charm around himself to avoid detection before venturing further through the trees and to the source of the noise. Eventually he came upon the scene of the battle, though it was no longer a battle. Dumbledore had been brought to his knees and the Dark lord was pacing in front of him, a smirk plastered on his face as he looked at his old teacher, wounded and broken in front of him.

“Not bad for a decrepit and useless old man Dumbledore.” Voldemort spoke, his voice quiet, with a hissing quality that made Harry shiver. “But you must have known that you could not defeat me. Perhaps when I first returned to my body, you may have put up a better fighter, but through the great power of the Dark arts I am now more powerful than any wizard. More powerful than Merlin himself.”

“Your arrogance is, as ever, your greatest weakness Tom. Even if I fall tonight, others will take my place and you will be defeated.” Dumbledore croaked in reply, the pain evident in his voice.

“Oh Yes Potter.” Voldemort said, “The Chosen One. The Boy who lived. Though I must admit the boy is talented Dumbledore and though with a little training and time, he might prove a worthy adversary, he does not have those luxuries. He will die with you on this field tonight old man. Oh but look at the time, I would love to stay here and chat to you about old times but I’m afraid I have other things

to do. Becoming indestructible is currently at the top of my list. Goodbye Dumbledore. Lethargus Maxima!”

A thin but lightening quick beam of brown light shot from Voldemorts wand in the direction of the old and helpless wizard in front of him. Harry stepped forward and wracked his brains to think of something he could do to protect his old mentor, but knew it was too late, any protective spell he could perform would arrive too late to save the old man. Amazingly, however, the spell had missed, passing inches above Dumbledore’s shoulder as the shocked wizard turned to follow its progress through the night.

The two protectors of the light locked eyes and, at the same moment, came to the same conclusion. The spell was heading for Harry. And Harry had not reacted in time to stop it. The advanced coma curse is so effective because it is one of the quickest curses known to wizarding kind and, though it doesn’t kill, it had been known to knock people out for months, even years at a time, depending on the power of the caster. Harry lifted his wand in resistance but knew that it was no good and saw, from the corner of his eye, Dumbledore turn away, seemingly unable to watch what he knew was inevitable.

All of this took place in less than two seconds and the beam was now closing in on the young wizard and he knew that this was the end. At that moment, however, he saw a figure materialise in front of him, landing on the floor with a thump. As soon as the man landed, the coma curse struck him in the chest and he collapsed to the floor, revealing the old and bearded face of Albus Dumbledore. Harry knelt down to his old head master and held his head, emerald green eyes staring into electric blue as the elderly wizard struggled to keep hold of his conscious for but a few seconds longer as he opened his mouth to speak.

“Harry.” He whispered, the act of speaking, which he had mastered one hundred and fifty years ago, proving to be a most arduous task. “Harry I’m so sorry.”

With these final words, Albus Dumbledore allowed the darkness to claim him and collapsed back into unconsciousness. Harry released his teacher’s head and got to his feet, his eyes locking with those of

his greatest enemy. Voldemort seemed to have frozen with the unexpected act of sacrifice but quickly recovered as his nemesis stood and pointed his wand to his heart.

The dark lord smirked and unknowingly echoed the words his ghostly sixteen year old self had spoken to Harry in the Chamber of Secrets.

“Fine. I prefer it this way Potter a chance to prove once and for all that all that saved you on that faithful night fifteen years ago was luck and the foolishly sacrifice of your mudblood mother.” He bowed slightly to his young opponent and whirled his wand in front of him in a sort of salute. “Now, let’s match the power of Lord Voldemort, heir of Salazar Slytherin against the famous Harry Potter.”

“You know”, Harry began, returning the bow and salute, “I’d rather match the power of Harry Potter, heir of Godric Gryffindor and Merlin the Great against the Half blooded Tom Riddle.”

Voldemort snarled in anger and swung his wand violently downwards, shouting; “Permultus Avada Kedavra!” An endless stream of green light burst from Voldemort’s wand, like machine gun fire, and shot towards Harry’s chest as the multi killing curse took effect. Harry threw himself to one side, opting to dodge the attack rather than risking his shield standing up to the onslaught. He then rolled to his feet and pointed his wand below him, thinking ‘Pulsum!’ and wordless shoot himself into the air. Voldemort’s wand followed him every inch of the way and Harry could feel the power of the deadly curses as they tracked him relentlessly through the sky, passing mere inches below his feet.

Reaching the peak of his ascent, Harry turned in mid air, silently disappearing as a bolt of green light passed through the spot he had just occupied. Reappearing a couple of feet from Voldemort, Harry shouted

“Extrudo!”

and was satisfied to see the electric blue and lightening fast bolt of magic find it’s target, sending the Dark lord flying through the air. He did not sit back, however, and followed the curse with a shout of

“Avada Kedavra!”

The spell found nothing but air, however, as Voldemort disappeared into limbo. Harry flung himself to the ground once more, knowing what was coming and was proven correct as what he recognised as the condolesco curse passed just inches to the side of him as he landed in a roll and came back up to his feet. He was not given a break, however, as he saw bolts of blue fork lightening heading his way, courtesy of the dark lord’s wand.

Thinking quickly, Thane’s words over Christmas on the similarity between magic and electricity and the aluminium oxide that formed the back of silver shields echoed in his mind. Moving his wand in a circle, Harry conjured a silver shield and could feel the heat being generated as the lightening was conducted by the silver, before shooting back at Voldemort who had to raise a shield of his own.

The electricity passed between the two of them in an endless cycle and Harry was starting to feel the strain of defending himself for such a long period of time and knew that he had to break the chain. Dropping his shield, he simultaneously apparated away, reappearing above Voldemort’s head and silently firing a killing curse to try and end the duel while the dark lord vanished his shield and reacted to Harry’s disappearance.

He was quicker than Harry had expected, however, and apparated away from the curse which buried itself into the ground, followed quickly by Harry who landed with a thud. Knowing that Voldemort would not have gone far, he rolled to the side to avoid the curse that he was sure was bound to come. He wasn’t quick enough, however, and with a gasp of pain, he felt the condolesco curse strike his ankle, making it feel like thousands of burning, white hot knives were piercing his skin.

Harry knew that, despite the immense pain, it would cost him his life to pause in a duel against Lord Voldemort and so, pushing the agony to the back of his mind, he continued to roll, before apparating away. Landing a short distance away in the woods, Harry took advantage of

his hiding place by waving his wand over his ankle and with a muttered; "Finite!" ended the pain which wracked it.

This peace did not last long, however, as Harry felt a rush of magical power and raised a shield to block the attack. But instead of a magical assault, there was a crack and Harry momentarily froze as the trees all around him started to tumble. Recovering his reactions, Harry apparated away just as a large and ancient oak started to fall towards him.

Landing on the edge of the forest, Harry immediately levitated one of the fallen trees and flung it at the dark lord. As the trunk flew at a shocked Voldemort, like a missile searching out its target, Harry pointed his wand at it once more, this time with a cry of,

"Deflagratio!"

Flames sprung from the oak as it continued to fly towards Riddle and Harry plunged his hand into his pocket and pulled out one of the ornate knives he had taken from his family vault, still stained with the blood of a vampire. Pointing his wand behind him, he shouted

"Pulsum!"

and felt himself being propelled towards his combatant.

Voldemort, meanwhile, pointed his wand at the trunk and the flames were quickly extinguished and the tree frozen as a jet of ice escaped the dark wizard's wand. As the tree continued on its path towards him, Voldemort allowed it to get ever closer, steadily slowing it down as it neared him. When it was mere feet away, he twirled his wand in a complex set of movements and the trunk shrunk and contorted until it became a shining silver sword.

Catching the sword with surprising skill, the dark lord parried the blow aimed at him by Harry and his knife and, flicking the sword like a whip, drew blood as Harry was caught in the leg. Realising the danger he was in, Harry dropped the knife and waved his hand, conjuring a silver shield from thin air to protect himself from the curse he knew would come. And it did. Voldemort thrust his spare hand outwards

towards his young opponent and an electric blue beam of light shot forth, crashing into Harry's shield. The shield remained intact but Harry and shield were thrown back fifty yards, landing hard on the ground as the curse had the desired effect.

Taking advantage of his enemy's prone position, Voldemort flung the sword at him, before pointing his wand at and shouting;

"Permiltuo! Avada Kedavra!"

Ignoring the pain in his leg, Harry jumped to his feet and directed his wand to a crumbling wall of the nearby manor. Quickly levitating the wall, Harry flung it in front of himself, before slashing his wand down and, with all of his power, whispered;

"Scissum Intermundia!"

The swords, which Voldemort had duplicated ten times, buried themselves in the ancient stone, but it had no chance against the power of the killing curse which smashed straight through it and towards Harry. Fortunately, his apparation shield swallowed the deadly curse and Harry allowed the rip to heal, before magicking one to appear behind the dark lord's back.

Voldemort sensed the powerful magic of the rip as it appeared behind him and threw himself to one side, agilely rolling to his feet and directing his wand at his young opponent. With a shout of;

"Flabrus Maxima!"

the dark lord conjured a huge and powerful gust of wind which flew at Harry, catching the young wizard off guard and blowing him backwards and onto the floor where he landed hard on his back. Voldemort then directed his wand to the massive pile of broken bricks and mortar which lay on the floor, smashed to pieces by his killing curse. Levitating them high into the air, Riddle flung them above Harry's head where they dropped down towards him.

Rolling to the side as a ton of bricks fell his way, Harry jumped to his feet and continued running, trying desperately to stay one step ahead

of the endless spells which now chased him across the ground. Jumping on to a half fallen tree trunk, which stood diagonally upwards from the ground, Harry raised a shield with a shout of;

“Arma Argentum!”

and started to return fire in Voldemort’s general direction as he started to run up the trunk and kept his eyes to the front to maintain balance.

As he neared the top of the trunk, Harry noticed, with satisfaction, that Voldemort had stopped firing curses and he thought that one of his spells must have hit or at least distracted his opponent for a time. His satisfaction didn’t last long, however, as, with a crack, he felt the tree start to rise into the air, slowly at first but then with ever increasing speed. As he reached about one hundred feet high and as he crouched down and clung on to the trunk for dear life, Harry felt the ascent slow and eventually stop and, looking down upon his nemesis, knew with dread what was about to come.

Steeling himself, Harry jumped into the air, pushing away from the tree which had now started to fall. He did this just in time as, the next moment, the trunk exploded, with a bang, into a thousand pieces and Harry had to hold his hands up to his face to protect himself from the flying shrapnel. He then realised, however, that he had a somewhat more pressing problem, namely that he was now rapidly falling to the ground one hundred feet below as a powerful dark lord took aim with his wand. Knowing that he had to act now, Harry twisted in the air and transformed into his Gryon form, spreading his wings as he continued to fall.

Going through the months of practice in his mind, Harry started to flap his wings and, as he fell to around fifty feet above the ground, his descent slowed and suddenly, for the first time in weeks, he was flying. He did not have time to enjoy the feeling of freedom and pleasure that washed over him, however, as he was forced to duck and fly downwards to avoid a stream of spells which flew his way.

Coming up from his descent, Harry came up with a plan and located his target some seventy feet below still relentlessly firing spells at him

and forcing him to keep moving. Swooping down wards once more, Harry flew in a sort of inverted arc, the deadly beams of green light following him every inch of the way as he flew, first almost straight down, before slowly pulling upwards until he was horizontal and heading straight for the stunned dark lord. With his enemy swooping down upon him at high speed, Voldemort didn't stand a chance of reacting in time as the gap between him and supposedly mythical beast closed with amazing quickness and the Gryon dropped the final few yards, sweeping him off his feet and landing on top of him.

Harry bared his teeth as he stood atop his old nemesis and, knowing that he had to take his chance, plunged his head downwards towards the dark lord's neck. Voldemort had recovered and reacted with incredible speed, however, and flung his arm upwards, pushing the beast off of him and high into the air with a well placed 'Extrudo'. Harry found himself flying, unwillingly, up to the sky for the second time in seconds and, seeing the dark lord spring to his feet, knew that he didn't have much time.

Waving his wand around him, he shouted;

"Fumeus Nebula!"

and felt satisfied as a huge cloud of smoke formed around him, dropping all the way to the ground and effectively obscuring him from view. Harry knew that he was still in danger, however, and so allowed himself to drop quickly and unhindered through the smoke, waiting until the last possible moment to silently fire the pulsum charm downwards and slow his descent, until he felt his feet gently touch terra firma.

As soon as he landed, Harry vanished the smoke with a wave of his wand, realising that it was now as dangerous to him as it was to Voldemort and possibly more so. But, as the smoke cleared and Harry, shield at the ready, scanned the field of conflict, Lord Voldemort was nowhere to be seen. Knowing that he was in mortal danger, Harry did not let down his guard and continued to circle around, reaching out his senses for any sign of magical activity. And there it was. Spinning on the spot, Harry brought his shield around just in time to block the, now visible, dark lord's Extrudo curse.

The shield did not completely spare his master from harm, however, and Harry stumbled back a few yards, struggling to stay on his feet.

Voldemort then pointed his wand at Harry's feet and ropes burst forth, snaking their way to their target. Harry lowered his shield to block the ropes, but at the last possible moment, Voldemort slashed his hand down with a cry of

"Scissum Intermundia!"

The apparition shield formed just in front of the ropes, swallowing them and disappearing less than a second later. The second rip tore through space time at Harry's feet and the ropes came flying out, tying themselves around his ankles before tripping him up at Voldemort's command. Harry immediately slashed his wand and hand downwards and felt the ropes fall away as the 'diffindo' charm took effect, but it was too late. Just as he went to stand up, he felt a great force painfully clamping his throat shut and was pulled upwards into the air where he hung, his hands scrabbling at his neck in a useless attempt to relieve the pressure which was suffocating him.

Harry then felt himself being thrown backwards, whizzing through the air and hitting a tree with huge force as he came to the edge of the forest. He was not allowed the luxury of sliding down on to the floor, however, as at that moment ropes sprung from thin air and bound the young wizard to the trunk of the tree as black spots started to cloud his vision, the strangulation curse still very much in effect.

Harry was about to pass out into the comforting arms of unconsciousness when he felt the pressure on his throat disappear and his head slump onto his chest, no longer having the energy to support it.

"This is the end of you Potter." He heard Voldemort hiss as though from afar.

Still clinging onto to reality from the brink of unconsciousness, Harry opened his eyes and looked up, only to be greeted by the sight of a huge jet of orange flame heading his way. He saw this but was strangely calm, accepting of his fate, even happy that he was about

to be relieved of the great burden which had rested on his shoulders since hearing the prophecy at the end of last year. His mind turned to his parents and to Sirius and he saw them clearly in his mind's eye, smiling at him, welcoming him, wanting to give him the family that he had never had. His mother's auburn hair glinting in the bright light. Like...like Ginny.

The youngest Weasley burst into his head, he saw her smiling at him, them kissing and laughing and then he saw her at the feet and mercy of Bellatrix Lestrange. He saw Ron and Hermione and Thane and Remus and the rest of the Weasley's and then he saw Neville, his eyes blank and unseeing. He saw the world cloaked in eternal darkness and at the whim of Lord Voldemort and the fate that surely awaited his friends and the only family he had ever known should he succumb to the flames which now bore down upon him.

With a new determination ignited in his soul, Harry felt his energy return to him and his magic spring to life, surrounding him as he quickly and wandlessly performed the spell he prayed would spare his life. The fire engulfed him and he could sense the tree start to burn as his world turned a ferocious orange. But he felt nothing but a small tickling sensation as the flame freezing charm took effect.

Finding himself free of his binds as the tree was incinerated, Harry knew that he had to take advantage of his opponent's distraction. Holding his wand out in front of him and still obscured by the flames, Harry silently apparated away, landing just feet from the Dark lord and attacking as soon as he felt himself re entering the field of battle.

"Extrudo!"

He yelled before his feet even touched the ground and Voldemort offered no resistance as the light blue beam flew at speed from Harry's wand and hit him in the chest. The dark lord was sent hurtling backwards, spinning through the air and closely followed by three bolts of light as Harry' cried;

"Avada Kedavra! Reducto Maxima! Condolesco!"

Voldemort twisted in mid flight, however, and the spells found nothing air as he apparated away. Just as he disappeared, a pop rang out

and Harry whipped around to face the source of the noise, to find nothing and no one there. He was about to turn again to try and track down his opponent when suddenly he felt a huge magical force strike him between his shoulder blades and an excruciating, white hot pain ripped through his body. Harry froze for just a second as the cruciatus curse took effect but managed to throw it off and conjure a shield just in time to block the green bolt of light which was heading his way.

Harry apparated away and behind his nemesis, hoping to catch him off guard but Voldemort himself then apparated from danger as Harry's killing curse approached him. Sensing a flux in magical power from above his head, Harry directed his wand above him and twirled it in a circle, conjuring a shield to block the barrage of spells which flew from Voldemort's wand. Apparating away again, Harry appeared behind his enemy's back only to find himself confronted with a number of dark curses courtesy of Voldemort's wand and he was forced to apparate away once more.

Appearing again, this time in front of the dark lord, Harry immediately found an Extrudo curse bearing down upon him and he was forced to quickly erect a shield to take the brunt of the spell. The shield did not break but it was, once again, too weak to fully negate the effects of the spell and Harry found himself sliding back a few feet, but this time Voldemort was waiting for him. Pointing his wand behind his young opponent, the dark wizard cried;

"Motus Humo! Cesso Evanescus!"

The ground behind Harry crumbled away and he felt the anti-apparation ward take effect as he was sent tumbling to the floor. Jumping quickly to his feet, wand aloft, he prepared to re enter battle but he was awestruck by the sight which greeted him. A huge wall of silver arrows, over fifty feet in both height and width, were flying up high into the sky, blotting out the sun before gravity took hold of them and they started to fall to the ground and their target.

Out of the corner of his eye Harry saw Voldemort wave his wand once more and turned away from the awesome spectacle in front of him to be confronted with another. A massive beam of pure black, pure dark magic was speeding towards him and Harry knew that he

had to act fast as the arrows continued to fall. Waving his wand in front of him, the air shimmered as he conjured a blockade of pure heat and the silver arrows started to melt. Very much aware of the pure dark magic shooting towards him and thanking God for Harry jr, Harry once more took advantage of the metal's molten state by swirling his wand in a circle and bringing the liquid silver together, before solidifying it into a shield. He then forced his own pure light magic into the shield and braced himself for impact.

As soon as the dark magic hit his light shield, Harry knew he was fighting a losing battle. The jet black beam was constant and relentless and his shield shuddered as it was pulverised and eventually cracked under the immense pressure. Knowing that it was now or never, Harry let his shield shatter and, conjuring up every last bit of magical energy from his reserves, pushed the light magic forwards. Harry's light magic pushed back against it's dark counterpart as the two powerful wizards battled for supremacy. Much like the priori incantatem of two years ago, the two huge beams of light pushed against each other, meeting in the middle as the wizards poured their magic into the fight they knew could decide the battle and, indeed, the war.

Though Harry fought with all of his strength, his thoughts of his friends, family and loved ones giving him the power and energy he could never have mustered on his own, he started to slowly lose ground as the dark beam advanced towards him. Closing his eyes to try and inject even the slightest bit more magic into his pure light beam, Harry knew that it was no good and, with one last, big push from Voldemort he felt a searing pain in his chest as the pure dark magic made contact and flung him back two hundred yards where he landed hard on the ground. He didn't get up again.

As his mind was filled with nothing but darkness, flitting between unconsciousness and reality, aware of nothing but an agonising and unrelenting pain which throbbed throughout his body, Harry Potter didn't notice as his wand left his hand and Lord Voldemort advanced upon him. Tom Riddle smirked as he looked out over his fallen prey, basking in the perverse pleasure he got from causing suffering to others, especially Harry Potter.

“There will be no boasting this time Potter.” The snake like figure hissed as he walked slowly forward, his wand stretched out in front of him, knowing that even if his opponent wasn’t completely lucid, his words were getting through. “There will be no stalling or torture, just a quick death. Avada Kedavra!”

The green bolt of light sprung at speed from the dark lord’s wand and hurtled towards the young wizard who, this time, offered no resistance barely aware that anything was happening at all. But as the deadly beam approached its target a rip appeared just in front of the stricken wizard and Voldemort had to turn on the spot and raise a silver shield to block his own killing curse.

Harry wearily raised his head, the fact that he was still alive surprising him somewhat, to be greeted by the sight of Mad-eye Moody leading Rubeus Hagrid and a group of around ten aurors to his rescue. Snarling with frustration, Voldemort raised his wand aggressively and, levitating a huge pile of bricks and debris from the nearby manor house, flung it at the Aurors and Hagrid. As the pile neared its target, the dark lord levelled his wand at it once more and shouted;

“Confringo Maxima! Permiltus Avada Kedavra!”

The advanced exploding curse struck the bricks and mortar and blew them apart with huge force, pelting the Aurors with shrapnel as they were flung outwards by the sheer magnitude of the blast. This was quickly followed by a dozen or more killing curses which shot into the crowd, indiscriminately ripping lives apart as they hit. Knowing that he had little time before the remaining living Aurors attacked again, Voldemort turned to Harry once more, who by now had managed to raise his head and look into the eyes of his greatest enemy.

“You’ve lost Potter.” The dark lord sneered. “The Rock of Initium is mine and we will meet another day, not too long from now, and I will rip your life apart along with the lives of everyone you ever cared about.

With that, raising a shield to block the curses of the five Aurors who had survived his attack, Voldemort touched his wand to his right forearm and smiled a smile of satisfaction as ten Death eaters wisely

heeded his call ran to his aid, the anti-apparation ward still in effect, and immediately launching into battle with the injured Aurors. Voldemort then turned and walked swiftly to the small graveyard situated around the back of the now destroyed manor house. Approaching a large and ornate gravestone, carved in the shape of an angel praying, looking over a sight which would surely and deeply sadden her, and marked simply with the word 'Custos', Voldemort smiled, thankful for his Latin lessons as a child, and pointed his wand at the ground below.

Closing his eyes, the dark lord waved his wand in a complex set of patterns and muttered incomprehensibly under his breath. After a couple of minutes of this, he opened his eyes once more and stowed his wand in his pocket, withdrawing, in its place, a small, silver dagger. Still muttering under his breath, Riddle brought the dagger to the tip of his right forefinger and gently pressed the sharp blade into his skin and watched as a single drop of blood dripped from his finger and onto the ground before his skin magically healed. The blood slowly soaked into the soil at the foot of the gravestone and the ground started to shake aggressively like an earthquake had just taken hold of the island. But just as soon as it had come it was gone and something started to rise out of the ground.

Harry watched, helpless, as the Rock of Initium rose steadily from the ground and into the air. It was bronze-red in colour, about a foot in both height and diameter and cut into a perfect gem shape. Harry couldn't take his eyes off of it, it seemed to emanate with magic, power and life, glowing mystically as it seemed to pulse like a beating heart. Rising up into the air, the Rock eventually came level with Voldemort's shoulder and he plucked it out of the air, staring at it reverentially, as if under the same hypnotic spell as Harry. Harry felt as if the Rock was calling to him and he couldn't look away as it seemed to breath life back into his broken body. He felt his magic reignite and his finger tips tingled once more with magical power as, with new determination, Harry knew that he couldn't let an object of such obvious power fall into Voldemort's hands.

Delving deep into his magical core, as Voldemort turned to face him, Harry summoned up as much power as he could muster drawing on every little bit of his magical reserves. And then, looking straight into

a shocked looking Voldemort's eyes, he twisted in his position on the ground and smashed through the anti-apparation wards as he flung himself through limbo and landed mere inches from the stunned dark lord.

As soon as his feet found terra firma, Harry pointed his wand at the Rock, snarled;

"I would rather die and see the Rock smashed to oblivion than see you escape with the power of the founders Riddle. Confringo Maxima!"

The bolt of magic escaped his wand and struck the Rock of Initium, which seemed to absorb the advanced exploding curse and for just a second, as time seemed to slow, nothing happened. But then, a deep crack appeared down the centre of the Rock and the spell took effect as both wizards were blown apart with huge force as the Rock exploded outwards. But, even flying through the air, winded, battered and broken by the power of the explosion, a barely conscious Harry saw that the Rock of Initium had not been shattered and destroyed but rather split into two even pieces which had been thrown apart in the blast.

Wearily reaching out his hand, Harry summoned one of the pieces towards him and, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Voldemort do the same. As he struck the ground at least a hundred yards from where the blast had taken place, Harry felt his piece of the Rock enter his arms and he grasped it tightly to his chest like a child with his teddy bear. Lying on the floor and, once again, battling against the almost irresistible pull of unconsciousness, Harry Potter heard a small pop and knew that Voldemort had fled, that he was no longer in any danger and that the battle was over and with this thought still in his mind he finally surrendered and succumbed to the darkness.

The room was dark and cold, completely devoid of any furniture or home comforts and lit only by the full moon as it rose steadily on its journey through the night sky, casting an eerie silver glow on the man within. The hooded figure hated this room and this house, not for the lack of anything comfortable or reminiscent of the comforts of home but for what it represented and the memories it held, but he did not seem to mind the darkness, somehow comforted by its silence and serenity. He was moving slowly and carefully as he took out a slim piece of wood from his cloak and pointed it towards a large, old fashioned caldron which sat in front of him. It was then that, impossibly, the caldron started to rise from the ground, hovering a foot off the floor before it started to move, guided by the wand, before settling itself on a stand by the large window which occupied most of the far wall. It was because of this window that the room had been chosen for the ritual, it allowed the moonlight to shine through it right until the optimum moment as Luna reached her zenith amongst the stars and when she would shine through the large gem which hung, without rope or support, high in the air, sitting just below the room's high ceiling.

With the cauldron in place, the figure redirected his wand to just below the stand and two small flames flew from the wood, landing below the cauldron where they stayed, not spreading or growing or extinguishing, but remaining still, as if held by some unseen force, as they warmed the black, granite cauldron. Now that everything was in place it was time for the ritual itself to begin. The hooded man raised his hand into the air and did not flinch as a small vial magically appeared, seemingly from thin air, and into his hand. Stepping forward to the cauldron, the man's face was illuminated by the small flames and any onlookers would have been shocked by what they saw.

The man was in fact only sixteen years old but there was no sign of youth in his brilliant, emerald green eyes, they sat emotionless in his face, which was a picture of seriousness and concentration. There was a scar, almost as old as the man himself, on his forehead in the shape of a lightning bolt and this was joined by newer, fresher scars and bruises, a reminder to him of the battle which had almost cost him his life. His eyes, which had once shone brilliantly, now seemed

murky in the low light, the life extinguished from them by the horror they had seen.

Uncorking the lid of the vial, Harry Potter poured the blood of Bellatrix Lestrange into the cauldron. While doing so, he fought hard, but unsuccessfully with his own brain, trying to force the woman out of his mind. But there she stubbornly remained, the look of shock and fear now permanently on her features as it had been when Harry had taken her life from her in little more than cold blood. Forcing himself to concentrate, Harry murmured an unintelligible incantation as the blood poured from the vial. It did not, as he and most would have anticipated come to rest on the floor of the cauldron, but swirled around the air inside of it. It was, Harry thought, eerily beautiful in the moonlight, like red wisps of hair in the wind and, unable to help himself, as he stirred the cauldron his mind began to wander.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-Pain and fatigue were the essence of Harry's body as he lay in the damp grass, his arms grasped tightly around the large gem of clinohumite which held within it the balance of life and death, not only for him but for both the muggle and wizarding worlds. These feelings seemed to melt, however, as he heard a voice calling his name and he opened his eyes to the most beautiful sight he had ever laid eyes on. The wind blew through Ginny Weasley's hair and she was looking slightly the worse for wear, her clothes dirty and torn and her face dotted with small scratches, some of which were still bleeding. But her eyes, were the only thing Harry was focusing on and they were full of nothing but love and concern. Neither of them said anything in that moment, but Harry would remember it forever as he stared into her eyes, brilliant emerald green into deep, beautiful brown and Ginny took his hand. "Harry are you alright?" She asked after what seemed like a lifetime, but still too soon. "I'm absolutely perfect." He replied and tried to pull himself up into a sitting position, only to cry out and collapse back onto the floor as his back painfully protested against the strain. Ginny put a hand on his chest, not hard, but with enough force to stop him from trying that again. "Just lay back Harry." She said, lying down by his side and placing her arm around him. "It's over. We're safe here." Various thoughts flitted briefly through Harry's mind. Whether Voldemort or his death eaters would come back. Dumbledore and the sacrifice he had made and whether or not the order had found him. His soldiers

and how many he had led to their deaths. But then Ginny rested her head on his chest and his heart told him that she was right. They were safe here together. And with that final, comforting thought, Harry closed his eyes and let the blissful darkness reclaim him.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

Harry stirred the potion for the fourteenth time and smiled grimly as the potion let out an ominous hiss. He then gave a wave of his hand, conjuring a wooden table where he could slice the heartstring he had taken from the dragon he had found slain in the battle. Taking out a knife, he started to carefully and evenly slice the string in to seven pieces, working by the moonlight and the light of the embers burning under the cauldron, this ritual could leave him injured and in a very vulnerable position, he couldn't afford to advertise his location.

With that job done, he placed the pieces, one by one, into the cauldron and again began to stir; first three and a half times clockwise and then three and a half times anti-clockwise, whispering, again, the incantation he had memorised days ago. The hissing immediately stopped and the blood flowing around the cauldron fell to the floor and, reacting with the dragon heartstring, bubbled and expanded in volume, so that the potion now half filled the cauldron. Harry's mask of calmness and stiff upper lip slipped slightly as he looked down into the cauldron of blood and organs and anyone watching would swear that they saw immense pain and loss in the young wizard's eyes, but then it would be impossible to tell, he had his armour back on too quickly.

Harry then waved his hand once more, summoning to him the seven Valerian roots he had stolen from the potions store cupboard the previous day and then, placing them onto the small table he had conjured for himself, he picked up his knife and began to carefully slice them. As the knife pierced and tore through the grey, skin like roots, Harry was forcibly reminded of the vampire he had been forced to take a knife to, along with the countless others he had slain in battle and he turned away, pausing for a second to recompose himself before turning back to the vital job at hand. 'Was there another way?' He thought. 'Could any of them have been spared and imprisoned in a safe location? Would he have wanted to spare them?'

This last thought chilled Harry to the bone, they were, after all living, breathing, feeling people whom he had robbed of life, did he have any right to take it from them?

As he carried out the monotonous task of carefully and evenly slicing the seven roots into forty nine pieces, Harry felt his mind take him back again, this time to the Great hall of Hogwarts at the end of term.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-Minerva McGonagall rose from her seat to the right of the middle, high back chair, which sat empty. She just didn't feel right sitting in Albus' chair and so it remained empty throughout the week and a half left of term after the battle and it remained empty now, a constant reminder of what they had lost and what she had to tell the students of now. Silence filled the Great hall as she stood, though the atmosphere had already been strangely subdued and restrained, for all except the Slytherins whom she turned to glare at now and whom quickly quietened at the stiff stare of their deputy headmistress. "As you know," She began, uncomfortable with what she had to tell them and trying desperately to remain calm and not break down, "a little over a week ago a great battle was fought in the war that surrounds us and it is my unfortunate duty to tell you that not ev-everyone came out alive." McGonagall started to stumble over her words and tears started to form in her eyes as she choked back sobs. Seeing that she would not get through this and somewhat more used to war and death from his job as an Auror, Thane stood and walked over to her whispering that she should sit down and that he would continue. "I have with me a list of those who fought bravely and died honourably in the midst of battle and in the defence of what they believed was right and I shall read it out to you now." Thane started his speech. " Of the DA; Neville Longbottom, Ernie Macmillan, Anthony Goldstein, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Zacharias Smith and Michael Corner. Of the Aurors; Peter Speight, Daniel Fletcher, Richard Winter, Ramond Abbatelli, Jane Ravenna, Tracy Olivier, Helah Leiffson, Mattan Arkema, Pontius Loncar, Damien Pelley, Georgine Thwaite, Astra Hambleton and Kleitos Rattray. Of the Order of the Phoenix; Sturgis Podmore, Elphias Doge, Jedediah Hutton, Emmeline Vance, Ceres James, Janus Lamberti, Dedalus Diggle, Kleio Langlois, Shri Kaur, Zephyr Spiros, And Rubeus Hagrid." Harry, once more, felt an incredible sense of loss as Hagrid's name was called out. Each of the names represented lives

and families that had been torn apart on the battlefield under his command and he felt guilt, loss and incredible sadness for those whom he led to their deaths. But Hagrid, Hagrid had been his first friend, nothing but kind to him right to the end when he died trying to save him. Hagrid would always have a big place in Harry's heart and he felt a cloak of grief wrap around him at the thought that he would never see him again and, looking up, he saw the way he felt reflected throughout the hall on the tear stained and grief riddled faces of his friends and classmates. Having paused to let his students, colleagues and indeed himself, have their moment of grief, Thane continued. "Though they have passed from this mortal realm, the names and memories of the fallen brave will last eternal in the hearts and minds of those they died to save and I would like to propose a toast to our fallen comrades." He lifted his goblet and his action was copied by students around the hall as they echoed back at him 'Our fallen comrades'. As Harry looked up, after the toast, he saw Thane staring straight into his eyes and, as he began to speak once more, he knew that he was speaking to him. "I will leave you with these words. Though our friends and workmates have fallen at the hands of the dark side, those who work only for selfish gain shall never be victorious. Because, though they can spill our blood, though they can rip our souls from our bodies and our lives from this realm, as long as but one person remains to stand up to them, they will not sleep easy at night and they will not go unopposed. Those who wish to spread darkness want to divide us but I say the loss that we share will only make us stronger and though we are in for hard times, though more will fall and though we will always mourn and never forget our fallen friends, in the end we will be victorious and the evil which seeks only to conquer and inflict pain will be exterminated and the light side will win in the end. Every time." Thane sat down to thunderous applause from three out of four tables and Harry smiled slightly and nodded at his teacher and friend as he got the message he was trying to convey. He still felt the all too familiar, all encompassing sadness over the loss of some of his closest friends but he knew that he still did not have the luxury of time to mourn. The fight must go on.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

The roots now evenly sliced, Harry took a small glass jar from the inside pocket of his cloak and took out the cork. Pouring in the forty nine small, brown beans he had counted out before hand, he immediately followed them with the valerian roots he had just sliced and watched by the light of the moon as the deep, blood red potion bubbled and slowly turned a murky, sludgy green.

With that done, Harry set the cauldron to simmer and looked at his watch. The unicorns blood had to be added precisely seven minutes before the full moon came to its zenith in the night sky and that, according to Hermione's calculations, would not be for another twelve minutes. And so, alone in a dark and long abandoned room in number twelve Grimmauld place with only his own thoughts for company, as he watched the moon as it ascended through the heavens and listened to the soft bubbling and hissing of the potion nearby, Harry Potter felt his mind drift away once more, this time to two days ago and the bedside of an old and powerful man.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o Harry gazed over the still, weak body of Albus Dumbledore and felt a feeling of helplessness bubble up inside of him, growing in the pit of his stomach before it threatened to overwhelm him. It was ironic, he had spent much of the year hating his guts, but the headmaster had saved his life and looking at him now; the once great and powerful Albus Dumbledore, frail and barely alive and Harry could not help but be reminded of his own mortality and the great task that still lay ahead of him. "Pretty scary huh?" Came a voice behind him and Harry turned to see Thane walking his way. "I know what you mean." Harry replied, "Even when he was banished from Hogwarts, even when I hated him, Dumbledore always seemed omnipotent and constant, always there when we needed him." Thane just nodded understandingly. "I didn't mean to disturb you mate but the Order of the Phoenix are waiting outside. Dumbledore left a message for the order in the case of his death or serious injury, he asked that you be there." "Tell them that they can come in." Harry said and Thane nodded before turning and walking to the door, returning moments later with much of the Order of the Phoenix in tow. Many of the order smiled at Harry as they entered and Mrs Weasley smothered him in a tight and loving hug, but not a word was exchanged as they gathered around their leader's bed. Harry watched from Mr and Mrs Weasley's side as the order filed into

the room many of them, Harry noted with a twinge of sadness and guilt, hobbling or wincing in pain from injuries they had acquired on the battlefield. Remus and Thane joined him, each putting a hand on his shoulder as McGonagall set up a strange and ancient looking device, like a muggle projector but large, bronze and unwieldy, set up with the projector pointing to the ceiling. Each of the order focused their attention on the air above the projector and, realising what was about to come, Harry just had time to steel himself for it before Dumbledore's face appeared. "If you are listening to this I am dead or close to death and unable to fulfil my role as head of the Order of the Phoenix and so I speak to you to give my orders to ensure the continuation of the order and the fight against Voldemort and the Dark arts." The head of Dumbledore spoke, floating eerily above the projector like a hologram. "First of all, I appoint my successors, either permanent or temporary depending on the circumstances in which I am speaking to you. As ever all major decisions are to be made by the council of the phoenix, voted on democratically by our most senior men and women. The position of head of the order passes to Alastair Moody and Minerva McGonagall to share equally, as I believe that between them they have all of the best attributes of a great leader and more and I have no fears over their ability to oversee the great work I am sure the order will continue to do." Moody and McGonagall both stood stock still as all eyes turned to them, their faces resolute and determined and Harry had to agree with Dumbledore's choice. With Moody's experience as an Auror and McGonagall's as a teacher, together they would make a formidable force. His thoughts were disturbed, however, as Dumbledore's head turned to him and began to speak once more. "I suspect that, by now, you will be wondering why you are here Harry. Well, I wanted to say that I am sorry. I know that over the years I have, in my efforts to afford you something even slightly reminiscent of a childhood, kept things from you that weren't mine to keep and I know that your trust in me has been broken. It is testament to my cowardice that I can only say this to you here and now when I am either forever gone or in such a state that I cannot speak to you in any other way. I can only ask for your forgiveness and say that whatever you may think of me, I have never felt anything but immense pride in you for the way in which you have coped with the hand fate has dealt you. And to show you that I do indeed trust you and that I have every confidence in your abilities and your maturity, as my last act as head of the Order of

the Phoenix, I hereby appoint you, not only as a member of the Order but also a member of the Council of the Phoenix, if you will accept. That is all I have to say my friends and whether it be in this world or the next, I am sure we will meet again." With those words, Dumbledore faded, leaving behind him a room of shocked silence as everyone turned to face Harry. "He can't-" McGonagall began but she was interrupted by Remus. "He can Minerva and he has." The werewolf began, "As Dumbledore's last request as head of the Order, for now at least, I feel that we should honour it and I have to say that I agree with him." "But he's just a child." McGonagall replied, looking around for support and finding little. "I know that you're just looking out for me professor and I appreciate that, but I ask you not to make the same mistake Dumbledore did." Harry said, cutting off Thane, Remus and, interestingly, Moody, who were about to jump to his defence. "Whether you like it or not, I am a part of this war, perhaps more involved than anyone else, and I can cope with the responsibility. I have battled Voldemort more than anyone, except Dumbledore and over the last year I have trained and organised the DA into a proper fighting force which more than matched the death eaters. I know that, for the next few weeks at least, I am a minor, but I am not a child professor." McGonagall seemed to be somewhat lost for words and Harry felt sorry for her, she had just had the responsibility of head of the Order thrust upon her and she was already being forced into something she disagreed with. He could see that the deputy headmistress cared about him and that meant a lot to him, but he was fed up with being nannied one minute and then expected to fight Voldemort the next. And so it was with a look of defeat and resignation, the witch spoke once more. "I still do not agree with this Potter, but I trust Albus Dumbledore and I could never disobey a direct order from him. Welcome to the Order of the Phoenix."

-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-O-

Summoning the small vial of silver blood to him, Harry walked slowly up to the cauldron, his eyes focused on his watch as the seconds ticked by, magically set to be exact and precise to ensure the success of the ritual. As the second hand ticked on to the twelve, exactly seven minutes before the moon came to the height of its journey, Harry poured the unicorn blood into the potion and watched,

satisfied, as it swirled around inside the liquid, before mixing and turning the potion a brilliant gold. The bubbling and the hissing immediately disappeared and the potion lay flat, as if just waiting to be taken.

With a wave of his hand, Harry extinguished the flames beneath the cauldron before conjuring a goblet, which he plunged into the potion, scooping up half a goblet full - the required dosage. Looking at the potion, glistening in the goblet, Harry hesitated for a second, he had had enough bad experiences with potions to be reluctant to try another, one that had never been tried before. Steeling himself, he brought the rim of the goblet to his lips and drank heavily, swallowing it all in one go. There was a moment when nothing happened and Harry was a little disappointed, even wondering as to whether he had brewed the potion incorrectly. But then the pain hit. Harry doubled over and his face contorted as his stomach was hit by an intense burning pain, as if he had just drunk a pint of sulphuric acid or was being stabbed from the inside with burning knives. For thirty seconds, Harry could do nothing as the agony took hold, but then it was gone.

Panting slightly, Harry stood up straight once more, the pain now just a dull ache, a reminder of what he was about to do. Checking his watch, Harry saw that he had five minutes until the moonlight would strike the Rock of Initium and the ritual would be complete and so he positioned himself in line with the rock and waited. Standing there, gazing out into the night and up to the Rock of Initium which still pulsed with a warm and life like glow, Harry started to doubt what he was about to do. Not for the first time, anxiety set in over what he was doing to himself and he had to fight with his own body and mind to remain rooted to the spot when a large part of him just wanted to run away.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-“And we’re sure that the unicorn blood will work, it doesn’t need to be taken by me in cold blood?” Harry asked as he sat on his bed, talking with Hermione Ron and Ginny and sorting out the final details of the ritual. “It doesn’t say that you need to kill the unicorn, or that it needs to be dead at all, not in any of the books I could find anyway.” Hermione replied, “But-. But are you sure you want to do this Harry? I mean, you could be killed and we don’t know what the effect will be of the Rock being split in two.” “I don’t

want to do this Hermione but I have to.” Harry said, “Voldemort will be going through with it and should he be imbued with the power of the founders, no one will be able to stand in his way. Not even me. Have we still not found any reference as to what happens if the Rock breaks?” “No.” Ginny began. “Nothing at all, it doesn’t seem to be something the founders even considered, there’s certainly no mention of it in any of the books we’ve read. It could work normally for both of you, it could work for just one of you, you might just gain power over two of the four elements or it could-. It could kill you.” Ginny’s voice cracked slightly as she finished her reply and Harry placed a comforting arm around her, secretly scared at the decision he had just made and his own words. “Then the ritual goes forward.”

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Harry looked at his watch and saw that there were just seconds to go. This was it. There was no turning back. Looking up to the Rock of Initium, Harry saw the silver moonlight shine into it and the magical clinohumite seemed to absorb it, letting none pass through until eventually the room was pitch black but for the pulsating orange-red rock, filled with silver light which seemed to swirl around it. And then, without any warning, the light was released, like a silver-red curse as it shot out of the rock with amazing speed and struck Harry in the chest. The light poured into him in a constant and relentless beam and Harry was lifted from the ground and into the air, his arms spread wide as if he was on a crucifix as he was engulfed in absolute and agonising pain.

For hours, it seemed, this torture continued and Harry felt his magic surround him, glowing a brilliant white as it tried desperately to protect its master from the force that was threatening his life. The silver-red beam of the Rock of Initium continued to pour into Harry’s chest, however, and eventually the room, illuminated by the bright light which emanated from him, started to turn dark and, with huge relief, Harry felt the darkness begin to claim him and didn’t put up a fight as he drifted into unconsciousness.

Eventually, the Rock seemed to eject all of its power and the beam faded and died, throwing Harry against the far wall as it disappeared. The Rock of Initium fell to the floor and the glow which had once emanated from Harry faded away leaving the room in almost

complete darkness. Harry slid down from the wall as he struck it with massive force and landed on the floor, his arms flopping out to his sides and his chest lying still as he breathed no more. Seconds slowly passed by and the boy who lived didn't stir, his heart lying still and his lungs permanently deflated. But then, almost imperceptibly, his hand twitched and Harry Potter's eyes burst open and he sat bolt upright, gasping heavily to bring life bringing air to his oxygen starved body as his heart reawakened, beating at speed. Harry just had time to feel immense pain wrack his body before he felt what little energy he had drain out of him and he collapsed back down to the floor into glorious unconsciousness.

The End.

Thanks for reading, I hope you enjoyed the story. Please review and tell me what you think and I'll get the sequel up.